

AN ANSWER
TO A
LETTER
OF

Mr. *John England's*
OF THE

Parish of *SHERBORNE, Dorset.*

Sent to Mr. F. B. upon the occasion of
his leaving the Meeting-House, and
joyning himself in Communion with
the Establish'd Church.

With a REPLY to so much of the PREFACE
Written in Vindication of that LETTER,
as concerns the Aforesaid ANSWER.

By *JAMES LACT*, Vicar of
SHERBORNE.

L O N D O N,

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NEWSPAPER

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THE PREFACE.

Courteous Reader,

THE Letter I have now Printed, was written at the Request, as well as in the Name of the Person who subscrib'd it. And truly, since, of his own choice, he had joyn'd in Communion with the Parish Church, and committed himself to my care, I thought it my Duty to do what I cou'd to Confirm him in it.

When I had sent it to Mr. E——, and suffer'd two or three Copies to be taken, for the satisfaction of some of my own Parishioners, I was in good hopes that both his Letter, and my Answer, wou'd soon have been forgotten, and all things hush'd into silence. But Mr. E—— cou'd not be so quieted; and therefore to the Press he flies, and Prints his Letter, together with a Preface in Vindication of it: a piece, which, by reason of the many mistakes in it, may justly bespeak the same Author.

The P R E F A C E.

One wou'd have thought that this Gentleman had been already surfeited with the Press: Or, if he were resolv'd to pass for an Author indeed, that he shou'd have pitch'd upon another Theme: No body else ow'd him so much Ill-will, as to Print his Letter. But some persons in all Ages will have a Name, tho' they do things unbecoming, and disturb both Church and State.

Shou'd all the Nonconformist Teachers in England follow the Example of this Gentleman, upon every such occasion, we shou'd have a very troubl'd Nation, and a greater Ferment among us, than for many Years last past. I knew no Provocation he had to this, and am sure he can't say he was engag'd to such a Course by way of Reprisal. 'Tis strange that those Men, who plead so much for Toleration and Liberty of Conscience, shou'd not allow persons the Liberty of going to Church, and serving God according to their Consciences in the Establish'd Communion.

*I, for my part, had no design to Print the Answer. 'Twas drawn up hastily, and not correct enough to venture far from Home. Neither do I think any thing of mine worthy of Publick view, especially on a subject of Controversie, where the Argument has been already so exhausted by the Ablest Pens, that scarce any thing new can be added, but a new Dress, or a different way of handling things. Were
my*

The P R E F A C E.

my Abilities as great as I cou'd wish, I had rather write one plain practical Sheet, that might be of good use to any poor Ignorant person, than a whole Volume accurately in a Controversial way. But let our inclinations tend which way they will, it no way becomes us to lye open to Acts of Hostility, and not endeavour to guard our selves from them; or suffer others to cast Reproaches upon the best Constituted Church, and not do what we can to defend it.

And because I am Sensible, there are many Faults both in the Answer and Reply, and would have none blam'd but my self; I think fit to tell thee, that neither of them was drawn up by a Club, as the Prefacer seems to apprehend of the Former. I consulted Mr. F. B. in some things, and had his Approbation in every thing (as I ought, writing for him,) but no other Person had any hand in it.

I have endeavour'd to be plain and intelligible, for the use of meaner Persons. And tho' it were easie to enlarge in the Reply, yet I was willing to draw it in such a narrow compass, that they might not want Money to purchase, or Time to read it. In compliance with these also, I have put into the Mother Tongue, what little I have quoted out of the Fathers, or Reform'd Divines abroad; and here and there have made use of the words of some of our own Doctors, without quoting them;

The P R E F A C E.

them; which, otherwise, wou'd have interrupted the threed of my Discourse, and have taken up more Room.

I have nothing more to say, but that as I was, much against my will, engag'd in this Controversie: So I will trouble thee no more in it, unless Mr. E. himself thinks fit to Reply, and puts his Name to it. My Controversie is only with him, to secure one of my Flock. And therefore, whatever may be publish'd without a Name, or with any other than his, shall (to use his own words) be look'd on by me, as non-scriptum.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THere is lately publish'd, A Dialogue between *Philaethes* and *Philotimus*, occasioned by a Letter from *J. E.* to *F. B.* in two parts, Price Stitch'd 6 d.

An Answer, &c.

SIR,

I Receiv'd your Letter; and presuming you expect it shou'd be answer'd, *either* by my returning to your *separate* Congregation, or else by letting you know the *Reasons*, why I cou'd not be so concluded by your Arguments, I have chosen the *Latter* of these. And because I propose to *confine* my self within the compass of a Sheet or *two*, I must pass by *some* things in your Letter, that are *nothing* to the *Controversie* between *us* and *you*, and resolve to be as *short* as possible in considering the *rest*, touching only the *heads* of things, and leaving the *improvement* to your-self. Now your Letter consists of these four parts:

- I. A Principle to proceed on.
- II. Some *Objections* rais'd from thence.
- III. Two other *Objections* against our Communion.
- IV. Your *mistaken*, and *uncharitable* Reflections.

I. A Principle to proceed on: which (if I am able to apprehend) is this, *viz.* That we have many things, in our way of *Worship*, not consonant to the *Holy Scriptures*; and which you are therefore pleas'd to call *Will-worship*.

In Answer to this, I must tell you, that no Church in the World has a greater regard for the *Holy Scriptures*, than the *Establish'd Church* of England. They are esteem'd by us, as a *Perfect* and *sufficient Rule*, for all the *Fundamental Truths*, and *Substantial Duties* of our Religion: And that is a Point we have *strenuously* maintain'd against the *Papists*. But when this Rule, that is suited only to things *necessary*, is as confidently applied to things *accessary* and *circumstantial*, it lays in the minds of Men *impregnable Principles* of *Scruples* and *Folly*.

To set this matter therefore in as *true* a light as I can (because upon this hinge turns all the Argument of your *Objections* rais'd from thence,) I shall endeavour to maintain these *three* Propositions.

1. That all *Circumstances*, relating to the *Worship* and *Service* of God, are not particularly determin'd in the *Holy Scriptures*.

2. That the *Governours* of the *Church* have the Power to determine those matters.

3. That the *People* are bound to obey them in *such* their determinations.

1. That all *circumstances*, relating to the *Worship* and *Service* of God, are not particularly determin'd in the *Holy Scriptures*. If they be, there must then be produc'd some *clear* and *distinct* Precept, perpetually *Obligatory* to the *Church* of God, requiring our observance of *such* or *such* *Circumstances*: there being (as the *Judicious* Mr. *Hooker* observes) *no* way, in this *Case*, to prove the deed of God, save only by producing that *Evidence*, where-with he has done it. But if there be no such thing apparent upon *Record*, you do (in the words of the same great Man) as if one shou'd demand a *Legacy* by force of some written *Testament*, wherein there being no such thing specif'd, he pleads that there it must be, and brings *Arguments* from the love of the *Testator*, imagining that these *Proofs* will convict a *Testament* to have that in it, which other Men can no where, by reading, find.

And yet, no *Worship* can be perform'd without these *Circumstances*, and a *due* Method in these is necessary to maintain the *Order* and *Decency* that becomes *Divine* things. Were *private* Persons left at liberty to do what they think fit in these matters, 'twou'd breed nothing but confusion: and such a liberty was never allow'd by any constituted *Church* in the *World*.

You your-selves own, that the *Time* and *Place* of *Religious* *Assemblies* may be *prescrib'd*. And if these necessary *Circumstances* may be thus determin'd, tho' they be not commanded by God: then it will be as lawful to prescribe what particular *Gestures* and *Habits* shall be there us'd. For these

these things are of the same nature, *Circumstances* as *Necessary* as *Time* and *Place*. And if we have any respect to the *Decent* and *Reverent* performance of the *Service* of *God*, they may be as *necessary* to be *determin'd*.

2. Having gone thus far, I will, in the *next* place, shew you, that the *Governours* of the *Church* have the *Power* to *determine* what *Circumstances* or *Ceremonies* shall be us'd in the *Worship* or *Service* of *God*. This is agreeable to that *Apostolical Canon*, *Let all things be done decently and in order*. And there's no *Christian Church*, but what makes *Laws* in matters of *Circumstance*, and compels both *Ministers* and *People* to obey them.

The *Jews* were more strictly limited in *Rituals* than we are: and yet their *Magistrates* took the liberty, upon occasion, to order some *Ceremonies* and *Circumstantial Actions*; for the doing whereof, it does not appear, that they had any *Command* from *God*. Thus *Solomon* instituted a *Feast* of *seven days* for the *Dedication* of the *Altar*. And *Hezekiah* continued the *Feast* of *unleaven'd bread* *seven days longer* than the time appointed by the *Law*. So the *Altar of Witness* was built, without the *Divine Command*, by the *two Tribes and half*, when they went over *Jordan* to their *own* possessions. And *Judas* and the *Maccabees* ordain'd the *Feast* of the *Dedication* of the *Altar*, to be kept from year to year at a *set* season for *eight days together*; which *Solemnity* continued even in the days of *Christ*, and, by his presence at it, seems to have been approv'd of by him in the *Gospel*. Now if *Magistrates* had such a *Power* under the *Law*, why shou'd they be divested of it in the times of the *Gospel*?

In matters that are meerly *Ritual*, the state of *Man-kind*, in different *Climates* and *Ages*, is apt to vary. And therefore these *Ceremonies* are to be *determin'd* by the *Respective Governours* of every *Church*, so as they may best tend to the *Peace*, the *Union*, the *Order*, and *Edification* of the *Body*, or *Society* of *Christians* subject to them.

3. When they are *determin'd*, we must conform our selves to them. For Obedience to *lawful Authority* in things *honest* and *lawful*, is a *Duty*, which *God*, in

his *Holy Word*, requires of us. Nor can we assign any other bounds to our Submission in this case, than those that the *Gospel* has limited. We must obey God, rather than Man; and we must, in the first place, render unto God the things that are Gods, before we give to *Cæsar* the things that are *Cæsar's*.

So that if the *Governours* of our Church have Power to make *Rules* and *Laws* in such matters, they must be obey'd, unless they break in upon the *Laws* of God and the *Gospel*. A mean cannot be put here. Either they have no Power at all, or they have a Power, that must go to every thing *The Bishop that is not forbidden by any *Law* of God. *This of Sarum. is the only measure that can be given in this matter.

Now, I desire any Man to shew me what *Ceremony*, or *Circumstance* of our *Worship* is forbidden in the *Word* of God, and to point me out the place: or else (as is insinuated by you in several Texts you produce for that purpose) where do we make that which is not the *Word* of God, of equal Authority with it, teaching for *Doctrines* the *Commandments* of Men? where do we add to the *Word* of God, either by appointing somewhat else instead of what God has appointed, or giving the same efficacy to humane *Institutions*, as God does to his? Our Church, in her *Service-Book*, makes known to all the world, that she detests the *Superstition* of the *Romish Ceremonies*, by condemning their *Superstitious Opinions*; First, in making them *Necessary* parts of God's *Worship*: Secondly, in ascribing an *efficacious Sanctity* to them: Thirdly, by arrogating a *Meritorious* condignity from them to themselves. We declare them *alterable* by Authority, make them no *essential* parts of God's *Worship*, and therefore not *Will-worship*.

To institute any new kind or species of *Worship*, is certainly *unlawful*; as to make any new *Object* of worship, whether it be a *visible Representation*, such as a *Picture*, and *Image*; or *Invisible Beings*, as *Angels* and *deify'd men*; a numerous Company of whom are worshipp'd in the Church of Rome: or any new *Acts* of *Worship*, such as frequent *Washings*, *Purgations*, *Sacrifices*, *Pilgrimages*, &c.

But the *Circumstances*, and *Ceremonies* of *Religious* actions, which are no where determin'd by God, may and must

must be determin'd by the Prudence of our Governours, without the least suspicion of *Will-worship*, because they neither are, nor are design'd for *Acts of Worship*.

So far are we then from admitting this Charge of adding to the *Word of God*, that we may return it upon your-selves, and bring you in *Criminal* upon it. For they, who forbid what the *Gospel* forbids not, do as much add to it, as they that command what the *Gospel* does not command. And if it be a Crime to command what that commands not, it must be so to forbid what it forbids not. And this is what they are guilty of, who hold that nothing is to be us'd in the *Worship and Service of God*, but what is prescrib'd by him in his *Word*. For if that be not a *Scripture Proposition* and Truth (as certainly it is not) then what an Addition is this? A greater surely than what they charge upon us. For all that is commanded among us, is look'd upon, not as necessary, but as *Expedient*. But what is forbidden by them, is forbidden as *Lond. Cases*. absolutely unlawful. The latter of which alters the *Nature*, whereas the other only affects the *Circumstances* of things.

I have now done with the main Principle, and Foundation of your Letter; which being but ill laid, the Super-structure may soon be taken down, I might have said, wou'd fall of it self. However, because you may, perhaps, think better of your Reasoning than other People, I shall return an Answer to.

1. You ask me what I think of bowing at the Name of *Jesus*, and turning to the East?

As for that of bowing at the Name of *Jesus*, I think it may be innocently us'd, tho' that Text in the *Philippians* be not brought to Countenance it. For bowing at the Name of *Jesus*, is no more than going to Church at the Toll of a Bell; the *Worship* being not given to the Name, but to the Blessed *Jesus*, at the Sound of his Name; we testifying (as the Canon of our Church declares) by this outward Ceremony and Gesture, our inward humility, Christian resolution, and due acknowledgment, that the Lord *Jesus Christ*, the true and Eternal Son of God, is the only

Saviour of the World, in whom alone all the *Mercies, Graces, and Promises* of God to Man-kind for this *Life*, and the *Life to come*, are fully and wholly compriz'd.

And we do this at the *Name* of *Jesus*, rather than at the *Name* of *Christ*, becaule it is his *Proper Name*, and calls to our Minds, all the benefits of his *Saving* and *Redeeming* Grace. The *Name* of *Christ*, rather signifies his *Uction* to his *Office*, than the *Blessings* which accrue to us by the *Execution* of it.

As for that *Custom* of *turning to the East*, it begun very early; and, as *Dr. Cave* tells us, was so universally *Common* in the *Primitive Times*, that there's scarce any *Ancient Ecclesiastical* Writer, but speaks of it. And this (I conceive) they did, as among *other* Reasons, so particularly for these two.

First, because our *Saviour*, in whose *Name* we *Christians* do *worship* the *Father*, is call'd the *East*: and the whole work of our *Creation* and *Redemption* was perform'd in the *East*.

Secondly, Because the *Sacred Altar*, or *Holy Table*, whereon *Christ's* *Body* and *Blood* is solemnly consecrated, and at which we *Eat* the *Bread of Life*, and *drink* the *Cup of Eternal Salvation*, is still plac'd there.

Nor can we be said to be guilty of *Idolatry* in *bowing towards the Altar*, either in our coming in, or going out of the *Church*. For the *Altar* is not the *Object* of our *Worship*, but we worship God himself towards the *Altar*, as the *Israelites*, in the *Wilderness*, worshipp'd God towards the *Cloud*; and afterwards look't towards the *Ark of the Covenant*, or *Mercy-Seat*, both in the *Tabernacle* and the *Temple*. Certainly those among you, that, in their *Prayers* lift their *Eyes* towards *Heaven*, or the *Roof* of your *Meeting House*, or stand with their *Hats* before their *Faces*, may with as much Reason be said to *worship* the *Skie*, the *Roof*, or their *Hats*, as we to worship the *Altar*, because we worship God with our *Faces* that way. But I need insist no longer upon this, since the *Church* does not enjoin it, but only commends it to the practice of all good and well-affected People.

2. You ask me what I think of being confin'd to *Forms of Prayer*? And here I must tell you, that I very much approve of the practice of the *Church of England* in this matter. The *common Cases and Necessities of Christians* are, for the *main*, always the same: and therefore may be more fully comprehended in a *Form*, than in *Extempore Prayer*. And if any *extraordinary* occasions happen, our *Ministers* are left at Liberty to express them in a *Prayer of their Own*.

I own that there is still a *gift of Prayer*, and that the *Spirit helps our Infirmities*. But the *miraculous gift of Prayer*, as it was in the *Apostles* days, is long since ceas'd. And we may be said to pray by the *Spirit*, when our *Minds* are so guided and influenc'd by the *Spirit*, that our *Hearts* go along with the words that we express, and so send up our *Petitions* to the *Throne of Grace* with *devout* and *suitable* affections.

And thus we may better pray by the *Spirit*, in the words of a *Form*, than we can in joyning with any one in his *Extempore Prayers*. * For when we know beforehand the words that are to be us'd, or may have them before our *Eyes*, our *Soul* is at perfect leisure to *suit*, and *raise*, and *change* her affections, according to the importance of every word. Whereas, while the *Soul* is held in *suspence* about the meaning of a *Sentence*, 'till such a time as it be finish'd (as it must happen in the way you contend for) she is, in a *great* measure depriv'd of this *Advantageous* leisure. And tho' the *Imagination* be still kept *busie*, yet the *Affections* can never follow but by starts, and with disorder.

The *Christian Religion* cannot Thrive without a *well-compos'd Liturgy*. For by this means, *Strangers* may know the *terms* of our *Communion*, and to what they are to say *Amen*, if they joyn with us in *Prayer*. And I do not see, how we can bring over any to our *Church*, where we cannot promise them that the *Devotions* there to be us'd, shall be *innocent*, and such as comply with the occasions of *Mankind*. If they'll venture, they may: but they are not in a condition to judge, whether the change will be for the better.

But

But whatsoever opinion *you* may have of *extempore Prayer*; is not the Prayer of *one Man*, as much a *Form* to all the *Congregation*, as that of *our Church*? And I desire to know, whether the *hasty Expressions* of any *single Person* be preferable to the *mature Compositions* of a set of *Learn'd and Pious men*, appointed for that purpose?

After all; the generality of those, who are so much against *Forms* of Prayers, do themselves, in effect, pray by a *Form*. The matter is usually the same, only they change the *phrases*, and invert the order of its *several parts*; sometimes beginning with a *Confession*, other times with a *Thanksgiving*, &c. or if they trust wholly to their own sudden *extempore* effusions, they must needs fall into great indecencies and extravagancies, *vain repetitions*, and *odd expressions*, to say nothing worse. They themselves must be sometimes sensible of this: I am sure, the most *intelligent* part of their *Congregation* is.

3. You ask me, how I can consent to have my Children *cross'd in Baptism*? And here also I must signify my approbation of this *Rite*, which is certainly not only *innocent*, but *decent*, and signifies the Duty of the *Baptiz'd*, and is to mind him of it. So says *our Church*—*We sign him with the Sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the Faith of Christ Crucify'd, &c.* We ascribe no *Sacramental Efficacy* to it; for *Baptism* is declar'd to be *complete* before: So that the *Sign of the Cross* adds nothing to the *Perfection* of the *Sacrament*; and being *omitted*, takes nothing from it. This therefore (says the late *Bishop of Worcester*) is no part of the *Baptismal* dedication. And the Minister acts in a *double capacity* when he doth *Baptize*, and when he *Signs* with the *Sign of the Cross*: when he *Baptizes*, he acts by *Virtue of Authority* deriv'd from *Christ*, saying, *I Baptize thee in the name of the Father, &c.* which being done, and the Child thereby solemnly dedicated to God in *Baptism*, he then speaks in the name of the *Church*, varying the number, *We receive this Child into the Congregation of Christ's Flock, and do Sign him with the Sign of the Cross, &c. i. e.* We

We *Christians*, who are already *members* of *Christ's Flock*, do receive *Him* into our number : and, in token of *His* being oblig'd to perform the duty belonging to *such* a one, do make use of this *Sign* of the *Cross*, as a *Solemn* declaration of his *admission* into the *Church*, and of his *obligation* to behave himself as it becomes a *Christian*.

There's no *Character* of *Signature* so universally known to be the *Mark* of a *Christian*, as the *Sign* of the *Cross*, which makes *St. Paul* put the *Cross* for *Christianity* it self ; because the belief of a *Crucify'd Saviour* is the *proper Article* of *this Faith*, distinguishing the *Christians* from *Jews*, *Turks*, and all kinds of *Religions* in the *World*.

And truly, the seeing a *Child* sign'd with the *Cross*, when he is *Baptiz'd*, will stir up, in *men* of the *dullest* capacity, a remembrance of their *Profession* of *Faith* in *Christ Jesus* : and will likewise, in all their *crosses* and *afflictions*, put them in mind, that these things are no other than they did voluntarily promise to undergo, when they were made *Christians*. Whatever *Corruptions* there are crept into the *Church* of *Rome* in this matter, there are none of them among us : And the leaving it wholly off for this reason, cannot be without *some* offence to *many* persons, who read how much it was used in the *primitive Church*.

4. The next thing that displeases you, is the use of *God-fathers* and *God-mothers* in *Baptism* ; a *Custom* very *Ancient* in the *Christian Church*. For, when any *Children* were to be admitted into it by *Baptism*, they had always some *selected* Persons to take care of them. And the *Reform'd Churches* generally have, and do still allow the use of *God-fathers* and *God-mothers*. But, besides the *Authority* of *Custom*, the benefit of this *Relation* is very *great* in *sundry* respects. The *Parents* may die whilst the *Children* are *young* ; and it will be no small advantage to them, to have those that will *advise* and *admonish* them, and *check* those extravagancies, the *briskness* and *gaiety* of their *youth* inclines them to. Or, if their *Parents* live, they may be *negligent* of their *Education* ; or want some Persons to *quicken* them in their *Duty*, and to *assist* and *joyn* with them in promoting the *Spiritual* good and welfare of their *Children*.

Children. To both thele might be added, That this is a great Mean (if well manag'd) of knitting Neighbours together in new and Christian bonds, by performing this good Office one for another, and concerning themselves in, and for the good of each others Children.

Nor shou'd any Persons object here the Parents being put under no promise. For the use of God-fathers and God-mothers is not design'd to exclude the Care and Duty of Parents, but to confirm and add to it. Parents are, by the Laws of God and Nature, bound to take care of the Education of their Children, and to seek the good both of their Souls and Bodies. But because (as was before observ'd) the Parents may die, before their Children are grown up to years of understanding, or be negligent, the Church has thought fit to provide this further security for them.

And tho' we bewail the little regard some Sponsors have to this serious part of their Office; yet (without thinking this an Argument against the Church) there are others, so sensible of their Obligations, that they omit no opportunity of doing their duty: and such will I take care to provide, if ever I have any other Occasion.

5. The last of the Objections, which has any relation to the Principle (for the two other that remain, I conceive, have none, and are therefore better handled by themselves) is that of *Kneeling at the Sacrament*. Now *Kneeling* I look upon to be a very suitable Gesture in receiving the Sacrament. For great are the Benefits, which are convey'd in this Ordinance to the worthy Receiver; such as the Grace of God, and the Remission of sins in the Blood of Christ. And if he, who receives some great Gift, or Pardon from his Prince, does fitly receive it *Kneeling*; why shall we quarrel at the humble Gesture of Him, who comes into the more immediate presence of the King of Kings, to beg Remission of past sins, and Grace for a future Amendment? But here you object these three things against it.

First, the Practice of Christ and his Apostles.

Secondly, Its unsuitableness to the nature of a Feast.

Thirdly, Its coming in by the Doctrine of Transubstantiation.

First;

First, You object the Practice of Christ, and his Apostles. To this I answer, That there is no certainty concerning the Gesture us'd by Christ and his Apostles at the Lord's Supper, whether it was *that* of lying, or leaning down, as at the Passover (for then it was St. John lean'd on Jesus's Breast) or *that* of standing. But admit, that it is as certain, as it is probable, that it was the leaning posture; yet it could not be of force to conclude ours, unless there were some Command to oblige us to follow it, or some cogent Reason, in the Practice it self, to shew the Necessity thereof.

Example, consider'd in it self, is no Rule of human actions. And as for *that* of Christ and his Apostles in the Celebration of the Sacrament, you, who insist upon it in the Posture of Receiving, do yet depart from it in other Circumstances, that are more certain. You don't think yourselves oblig'd to receive it, either in the Evening, or in an upper Room, or in Unleaven'd Bread; all which Christ and his Apostles must be acknowledg'd to have done in that Supper.

The Posture, wherein it was first receiv'd, was no part of the Institution. So that the Institution is not broken, when the Posture is alter'd. It is only the thing which is appointed. But as for the Posture, the Time, or the Place, or the Company, they are little matters, that are unworthy of a particular appointment, and are left at Liberty to be ordered, as Mens discretion shall judge most convenient. They therefore, who kneel at the Sacrament in compliance with the Customs and Constitutions of the Church, whereof they are Members, do manifestly follow the Example of Christ: For the Scriptures tell us, that he observ'd That Passover-gesture, which was usually receiv'd among the Jews, tho' it was different from the Gesture at its first Institution.

Secondly, 'Tis objected, that Kneeling is no Table-gesture, and unsuitable to the nature of a Feast. But surely, as the Lord's Supper is no common Feast, so it is not to be guided by the Rules of common Table-fellowship, but by more reli-

gious Considerations. To have the Head cover'd, is an ordinary Posture at other Tables; but will you therefore assert, that men ought to have their *Hats* on at the *Holy Communion*?

This is a *Heavenly Banquet*, wherein we receive the greatest Benefits, no less than our Saviour *Christ's blessed Body and Blood*, i. e. those Benefits which his *meritorious Death* procured for us. It is a *Feast*, whereat we confirm the *new Covenant*, and solemnly give thanks and praise to *Christ*, and pour out many *Prayers and Promises* to our *Heavenly Lord*. And when we are *exercising Repentance*, and uttering Praise, and making *solemn Prayers and Oblations*; it is not improper to use such *Gestures*, as best become *Devotion*. Were we left at our own liberty, we should be apt to fall low on our knees before his foot-stool.

Thirdly, 'Tis objected, That this *Gesture of Kneeling* came in by the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, &c. This, Sir, is a thing more easily said than prov'd. *Transubstantiation* is but a novel Doctrine. The Servants of *Christ* did for many Ages before, receive this *Holy Sacrament* in a posture of *Adoration*; which was either *standing* or *kneeling*. *Honorius* did first indeed decree *Adoration* to the *Host*, but not *kneeling* at it. For that is a Posture no where enjoin'd in the *Church of Rome*; and some of them say it is not much material in what *Gesture* their *Adoration* be perform'd. All adore, not at the *Receiving*, but at the *Elevation* of the *Host*. But tho' the *Papists* be very faulty and *inexcusable* in this matter; yet how comes this to involve us in their guilt? Our Church has, in the *Rubrick* after *Communion*, declar'd against any *Adoration*, either of the *Sacramental Bread and Wine*, or of any pretended *Corporal presence* of *Christ's natural Flesh and Blood* therein. And *kneeling* is there said to be for a *signification* of our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the Benefits of *Christ* therein given to all worthy *Receivers*. And surely, we cannot be said to harden the *Papists* in their *Idolatrous worship*, when we do, in such express terms, protest our abhorrence of it.

No abuse of any thing renders it simply evil and unlawful to be us'd in the worship of God, upon that account.

If

If so, then we must not use the *Bells, Fonts, Pews, and Desks* of our *Churches*, all which were charm'd by *Popish Prayers* in a *Superstitious* manner. And yet the *late Reformers*, when they were gotten into the *Churches*, did not think it *reasonable* that they should be diffus'd upon that account.

The Reason which the *Scripture* renders, why *Hezekiah* brake the *brazen Serpent*, is, because, even unto those days the *Children of Israel* burnt incense to it, as it is in the verse cited by you. Let it therefore be prov'd, that, even in these days, we use this *Gesture of Kneeling to Superstition and Idolatry*, and I doubt not but our *Magistrates* will be ready to *abolish it*.

Thus I have answer'd the *five Objections* rais'd from your *Principle*. I come now,

III. In the *third* place, to *two other Objections* against our *Communion*, propos'd also by way of *Question*.

1. *First* then, You ask me, how I can *communicate* in the *Lord's Supper* with *prophane Swearers, Sabbath-breakers, Drunkards, &c.* as, you say, I must needs sometimes do where I now go? But are you sure that *such* do *communicate* with us? Or, if they have been *such*, how can you tell, but that they may have repented of their sins? And every *Penitent Man*, who is fully resolv'd to leave all his sins, is really *worthy* to receive the *Sacrament*. This is a going to the *Fountain of Holiness*: It may be a Means of obtaining the *Divine Grace*, and a great help to him in his new undertaking.

Our *Church* gives no *Encouragement* to *Impenitent Persons* to approach the *Holy Altar*, as may be seen in the *Rubrick*, in the *Canons*, and in the *Exhortation* before the *Communion*. Yea, she *vehemently* dissuades them from coming, whilst *such*. And if any are really *scandaliz'd* by the *Company of such*, as are *notoriously* wicked, that offence may be remov'd: and upon complaint made against them in the *Congregation*, the *Minister* may deny them the *Sacrament*. So that Our *Church* takes some care in this matter, tho' you seem to be *Ignorant* of it. But if, notwithstanding this, *unworthy Persons* are sometimes admitted,

their *unworthiness* will not hinder our *Acceptance*, nor ought to deter us from doing our *Saviour* and *our own Souls* this *Service*. We do but *our Duty*: and it is our *Right* to receive. But if *any Person* comes without *due preparation*, he shall bear his *own burden*, *eat and drink Judgment to himself*.

'Tis generally thought, that the *wicked Traytor Judas* did partake of the *Holy Supper*, when it was *first* instituted by *our Lord*. Great abuses crept into the *Celebration* of this *Feast* among the *Corinthians*. And yet the *Apostle* never so much as insinuates that the *Rest* of the *Body* shou'd *separate* themselves, and *forsake* the *Communion* of that *Church* where these *scandalous enormities* were committed. Every *Man* is charg'd to examine *himself* and not *another*, *before he presume to eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup*. And if men wou'd spend *less* time in prying into the vices of *others*, and more in searching their *own Hearts and Consciences*, and finding out every *wicked thing*, in order to their amendment, there wou'd be more *worthy Communicants* than now there are.

I have read *1 Cor. 5. 11.* and do find that you are as much *out* in applying that *Text*, as many *others*. The *Apostle*, in those words, gives not the *least* countenance to *Private* mens withdrawing from the *Churches Communion*, tho' *wicked Persons* still continued in it: but he exhorts them to forbear all *familiar Conversation* with such, not to contract any *intimacy* with them, lest they be induc'd to imitate them in their *evil practices*.

And indeed, (as a *Learn'd Father* of our *Church* observes) there are many *Reasons* to break off *Private Familiarity* which will not hold, as to *Publick Communion*. For our *Communion* in *Publick* is a thing, which chiefly respects *God*; and a *necessary Duty* of his own appointing, the benefit whereof depends upon his *Promises*, and all the *Communion* we have with *other men* there, is only joyning together for the performance of a *Common Religious Duty*. But *private Familiarity* is a thing, which respects the *Persons* we converse with, and a thing of *meer choice*, and hardly to be imagined without *Approbation* at least, if not *Imitation* of their wickedness. And therefore to argue from the *one* to the *other* is very *unreasonable*.

He

He that says the People may not *Communicate* with wicked persons, falls into the Errour of the *Donatists*, which *St. Augustine* and others have infinitely confuted. And *Mr. Vines*, a late *Non-conformist*, in his *Treatise of the Sacrament*, says, *That the separation of the Godly from God's Ordinances, because of the corrupt lives of some in the Church, is no where by any Syllable of Scripture allow'd or countenanc'd, being contrary to the Example, or not warranted by the Command of Christ and his Apostles: and it is a vain pretending to a Holiness, above their Rule or Example.*

2. Next, you ask me, Whether I find better means of *Edification*, and growing in *Knowledge* and *Grace*, where I am? To this it may be answer'd, *viz.* I believe we have better means of *Edification* in the *Communion of the Church of England*, than in *separate Meetings*. Our *publick Prayers* are every way fitted for *Edification*. And, if we come with an awful sense of God in our Minds, with *serious* and *good* purposes, and *devout* affections; we need no better helps to express them, than the *Churches Service*. For therein (as 'tis observ'd) are *sound, suitable, and well-compos'd* Prayers, which extend to all *Necessities*, begging all *needful Graces*, and *praying* particularly both against *Sins* and *Calamities*, *requesting outward Blessings*, and *giving thanks* for the Receipt of *Mercies*, and *interceding* for all *states and conditions* of Persons, and suited to the *great Periods of life*. In all which, they pitch upon the most *pertinent* and *proper* things, and express them in *grave, plain, and significant* Language, and are intermixt with *Responses* to fix attention, and to call back *wandering thoughts*; and are parcell'd into *Collects* to give breath, and not weary us out with an *un-interrupted* continuance of *intense Affections*. So that if we bring with us a Heart to desire these things, here we have *prayers* to suggest, and express our desire of them: yea such as, whilst they do express, are greatly fitted to increase them.

Thus are our *Prayers* fitted for *Edification*. And this, *great Numbers* of truly *Pious*, and *Devout* Souls have found, and from their own experience can testify concerning them.

And

And as for the business of *Preaching*, I think I may (without the censure of *Partiality*) say, that generally speaking, we have *better* means of *Edification* in that respect also. Our *Preachers* mostly insist upon those Subjects that are most *Useful*. Here you shall have *sound* Divinity, *strength* of Argument, and *distinctness* of Method. Their Style is neither *Flat*, nor *Bombast*, but *Smooth* and *Easie*. And tho' perhaps in their *delivery* they change not their *Tones*, and *Postures* as often, or as much as some *others*; yet they do it, when there's occasion, with all reverence and *suitable* warmth and earnestness.

That herein we excel to the *Edifying* of the *Church*, may be plainly made appear, by comparing the *Sermons* printed by *Church-men* with those of the *Dissenters*. And I doubt not but the Comparison wou'd hold of *our* side, tho' you took in the *Volume of Sermons*, lately Printed, upon *Man's* *sinfulness*, and *misery* by Nature.

But suppose it true (which we shall by no means allow) that the *dissenting Ministers* are the *best Preachers*; yet still there's enough to with-hold Persons from *Separation* upon this account, because they are to *Edify* and *Build up* the *Church of God*, as well as *themselves*, and must not break the *Publick* Unity and Peace to carry on their *own* profiting in *Private* Graces.

This pretence of *better Edification* will cause *endless* divisions in the *Church*; and Men will not know where to settle. It supposes that every Man must Judge: And so a great part of the *World* being *Ignorant* and *Vicious*, *Partial* and *Prejudic'd*, *False* and *Insincere* to *themselves* and *others*, they may run from the *Church* to the *Meeting*, from *Presbyterian* to *Independent*, from *Independent* to *Anabaptist*, or *Quaker*. If this be made a Rule, tho' they be under a *Learn'd* and *Faithful* Pastor, yet upon *another* Man's coming into the *Country*, that is more *Eminent*, they may forsake their *Pastor* and joyn to the *other*. And, if after this, still a more *Eminent* Man comes, they may leave the *Former*, and joyn to *him*, and never stop, 'till they come to their *Graves*, to find out *better Edification*. What confusion this wou'd breed in the *Church*, and how great discouragement 'twou'd be to *Honest*, *Laborious* Ministers, I leave you to judge.

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The old Non-conformists wou'd, by no means, allow the pretence of *better Edification* to be a *sufficient Cause* for *Separation*. And whoever considers the *Ignorance* and *Instability* of the *Vulgar*, will never think that they are as *likely* to know what is better for *Edification*, as the *Wisdom* of the whole *Nation* in *Parliament*, and the *Governours* of our *Church* do.

Besides, *Edification* does not so much depend upon the *Persons Ministering*, as upon *God's Blessing*. And tho' *Paul* may *Plant*, and *Apollo* may *Water*, it is *God* that gives the increase. And the *Grace of God*; who is the *God of Peace* and *Order*, may (I am sure) be much more reasonably expected by *those* that keep the *Unity* of the *Church*, than by *such* as *separate themselves*, only to gratifie their *itching Ears*.

These are all the *Objections*, against the *Communion* of our *Church*, in your *Letter*. As for your pretty turn upon *Schism*, I think that *better* rankt with your *mistaken* and *uncharitable* Reflections. And because I don't find (notwithstanding what you have said) that there are any *sinful Terms* in our *Communion*, I shall think my self very *safe* where I am.

I V. To come then to your *mistaken* and *uncharitable* Reflections. And these are against the *Establisht Church* in *general*, and *myself* in *Particular*; tho' sometimes you strike with a *double Edge*, and endeavour to wound *Both*.

I. *First*, I will take notice of those, that chiefly respect the *Establisht Church* in *General*. And here you ask me, if it be the *strictness* of your way, that makes me decline it; and because I might take more *Liberty* for the *Flesh*, and live at large without *Controul*, that I go to the *Establisht Church*? as if this *Church* indulg'd Men in the *Practice* of all manner of *sin*: and *Piety* and *Strictness* of life were only enjoy'd in your *Communion*.

Next, you tell me of *Prophane Swearers*, *Sabbath-breakers*, *Drunkards*, &c. with whom I must sometimes communicate, if I receive the *Sacrament* where I am: and you intimate

intimate that there's no care taken to keep *such* off. What care there is taken in this matter, has been already told you. And I am well assur'd that such Persons rarely come to the *Sacrament*. Rather, where one comes to this *Sacred Feast* without due Preparation, *two* or *more* stay away, who might, no doubt, be receiv'd as *welcome* Guests. And I'm afraid, that this *last* Extreme has been mostly Occasion'd by some of your *Divines* stretching the Duty of Preparation too far, and setting the pitch of Fitness so high, that none but *Christians* of the *first* Rank are able to reach it.

Then, under the third Head of *better* Edification, you say, some observe, That no sooner Persons begin to grow *serious*, and to mind Religion in earnest under the *Establish'd* Ministry, but very ordinarily they come over to you. An Observation surely of some proud Pharisees, who trusted in themselves, that they were *Righteous*, and so despis'd others. And it is as much as to say, that we have scarce any persons that are *Serious*, or do mind Religion in earnest, among us: and that as soon as Men begin to have any sense of Religion, they go over to you.

These, Sir, are *hard* Censures, and *heavy* Charges, much like those of *Heathen Celsus* against the *Christian Religion* in General.

'Tis true, that *Christ* has fore-instructed us by many *Parables*, that there would be, in his Church, a mixture of Good and Bad Men; comparing it to a Field, wherein *Wheat* and *Tares* grow up together: To a Net, wherein are *Fishes* of all Sorts, &c. And I doubt not but there are a great many *ill* Persons among us, as there are in all *Communities*. But why shou'd this be charg'd upon the Church? And why shou'd it therefore be thought *Necessary* to depart from it?

Men of no Religion will many times profess themselves of the *Establish'd* Communion, which side soever be uppermost. And I doubt not but the *Prophaneness* of this Age is, in a great measure, owing to the *furious* and *ungodly* Zeal of the late Troublers of our *Israel*. For some Men, observing so many Villanies practis'd, and so much Mischief done under a Cloak of Religion, thought it best to make no pretensions

tensions to it. And so fell into all manner of *Looseness* and *Extravagance*.

However, be it as it will; why shou'd the Faults of these Persons be charg'd on the whole *Communion*? We have no *Doctrines*, or *Constitutions* in the *Establish'd Church*, which comply with *wickedness* and *debauchery*, or that are *hindrances* to *Holiness* of Life, and true Devotion in Religion. Here's no *Purgatory* to keep us from Hell, no *Pardons* to be bought, no *Indulgences* to be purchas'd, no expunging any one *Commandment* out of the *Decalogue*, or contriving *Arts* and *Devices* to make void the rest. We don't excuse our sins by pretending all our *Actions* are under a *Fatal Decree*, and come necessarily to pass. We have no *Covenant* without *Conditions* on both sides: nor do we believe that we are so far the *Elect* of God, that we shall be sav'd, let us live as we list. We have no way to *Heaven* but by *Faith* and *Obedience*. We own that without *Holiness* no Man shall see the Lord. Without this, tho' we be of a true Church, it will be of no solid comfort or advantage to us. We exempt not our selves from any *Tyes* of *Godliness*, by phancying our Religion to consist only in *Believing*: nor do we place it in outward shew and ceremony. In short; what was said of the *Lacedemonian* Laws, that it is the Property of them all to enflame Mens Minds with the love of *Virtue*, and to create a contempt of empty and sensual Pleasures, may be more truly said of the *Articles*, *Canons*, and *Liturgy* of our Church.

And if these things be so, is it not an *uncharitable* thing in you to throw dirt in the Churches Face, because there are some wicked Persons in her *Communion*? Wou'd not you have thought your self hardly us'd, if from the misfortunes (so I call them in respect of you) that lately happen'd in your own house, any Persons shou'd have spoken ill of Mr. England? Was not every Body sorry for them, sorry for such Villanies? And might not the same things have befall'n any other Family?

If *impertinent* talking of Religion be Religion, if endless *Scrupulosity*, and *straining* at Gnats, if *Censoriousness*, and *rash judging* our Betters and Superiors, if *Melancholy sighing* and *complaining* be true Christianity: If thinking highly of our selves, if taking Pleasure in hearing of the Sins of the con-

trary Party——if *these*, and such as *these* be the main Points of true Godliness; then I must confess, the Sons of the Church of England are not generally the most Holy Men. But if a Reverend sense of God, and Conscience; of keeping all his express Laws; if Justice, Charity, Modesty, Humility, Sincerity, Patience, Peaceableness, and Obedience to Governours be the Principal ingredients of a good life (as doubtless they are) if we take our Measure from our Saviour, the Apostles, or the Prophets; then I doubt not but there are as good Christians among us, as in any other Communion whatsoever.

2. Secondly, I cannot but take notice of your uncharitable Reflections upon my self. You intimate that I left your Congregation, either to promote my worldly interest, or to indulge my self in Sin. As for the first of these, I cannot see how that can be at all advanc'd by this Change; nor as I see, lessen'd. And for the latter, if you wou'd believe me, who know more by my self, than any Body else can, I had no such design: neither do I think such a design cou'd be better serv'd now, than before.

Whatever allowance you think you have to enquire into the behaviour of others, you shou'd not Judge without some Grounds or Evidence, and at first dash prick a Man down for a Villain. If my own heart deceive me not, I have (to use your own words) as warm affections, as lively convictions, and look as much Heaven-ward, as ever. But my fault is, I have left your separate Congregation, am quite gone off from you; and therefore am look'd upon by you as a sort of Apostate, one that has made Shipwreck of Faith, and a good conscience; a Man almost stak'd down to final Impenitence; and of whom, there's scarce any hope, unless I so consider my ways, as to return to your Assembly. Whoever reads this part of your Letter, will find that you endeavour to fright me from the Church. Your Argument is much the same with that the Papists use to perswade Men into, or to keep them in their Communion, as the safest way to Heaven; since they so confidently Damn all men, whom, tho' never so unjustly, they thrust out of the Church.

And now, Sir, if you must know the Reason why I left your Society, I'll tell you, it was out of the Care I had of my

my Soul. I was terribly affraid of the *Sin of Schism*; and knowing that you wanted *Episcopal Orders*, I much doubted whether you were regularly *commission'd* either to *Preach* the Gospel, or to *Administer* the *Holy Sacraments*. And therefore I have committed my self to the care of *One*, whose *Ordination* is held *sufficient* and *valid* on *both* sides; and whom I look on to be the *Proper Minister of this Parish*: against whose either *Life*, or *Doctrine* I believe no *just* Exception can be made. They are not *Gifts* and *Ability* to perform an *Office*, that give a *Man* *Authority* to exercise them, and oblige the *People* to hear him; but he must receive *Commission* from *such* as have *Power* to give it.

I take your Case, and that of some of the *Reform'd* *Clergy* abroad to be very *Different*. They wou'd have *Episcopal Orders* if they cou'd, and think it their *unhappiness* that they have not: and God (no doubt) will make great allowances for Cases of *Necessity*. But you are under no such *Necessity*: our *Bishops* are *Ready* to *ordain* any man that is qualified for *Learning* and *Sobriety*, and that will give such *Assurance* of his *Sincerity*, as every *wise Constitution* will require.

But here you tell me that the *Charge of Schism* is an *old thread-bare Argument*, that has been *answer'd over and over*. So you say; but greater men than your-self affirm the quite *contrary*. The present *Bishop of Gloucester* declares his sense of this matter in these words; "I am most certain that the *Errours of Popery* are not more plainly detected, and expos'd, than have the *Principles of our Protestant Separatists* been abundantly confuted, and the greatest vanity of their *Pretences* demonstrated to *All* that are Capable of seeing with their own Eyes. And (not to mention any others) who was ever so hardy, as to encounter Mr. *Hooker's* incomparable Book of *Ecclesiastical Polity*, tho' Written an *Hundred* years ago? You wou'd do well to try your skill there, since you have such a knack of writing *Controversies*. He's dead, as well as Mr. *Baxter*: and if you can confute his Writings, I'll engage you shall gain more *Profelytes*, than any Man in *England*. [Mr. E. in the year 1700 Printed somewhat against Mr. *Baxter*.]

But I forget my self, and consider not that, if you can turn the *Schism* upon us, the business is done without any further trouble. You have now run (say you) into that Sin, which you pretended to avoid. For, *Schism* (according to the Church-mens notion) is an unnecessary Separation from a true Church. Now you belong'd to our Church, having been Baptiz'd, and bred up in it: And yet you left us; and therefore (even according to them) you are guilty of *Schism*.

I have many things to say upon this head. But being almost weary of the work, I shall give it as short an Answer as I can. I like the definition of *Schism*, and own it to be an unnecessary Separation from a true Church: And am content that the Case between us, and all the *Dissenters* in England, shou'd be determin'd by it. But you argue very weakly from it. Your saying that I was Baptiz'd in your Church, is as great a mistake, as the Ground of your quarrel with my Brother. I was Baptiz'd in the *Establish'd Communion*, and in my younger Years bred up in it. So that in going to the Church, I do but like a Traveller, who, finding himself out of the way, returns back into the way where he stray'd.

However, suppose I had been Baptiz'd and bred up in the Communion of your particular Congregation, all my days: yet I think my joyning in Communion with the Church wou'd not make me Guilty of *Schism*. The Church of England has been look'd on, by the Reformers abroad, and the most sober Non-conformists at home, to be a true Church: and the *Establish'd Church* it has been, ever since the Reformation. And, unless you can prove that its Terms of Communion are sinful, I am, upon the account of its being the National, *Establish'd Church*, oblig'd to desert your separate Congregation, and joyn my self with it. And indeed, if we can hold Communion with it without a sin, a Separation from it can never be necessary.

The Church of Rome will not admit us, unless we profess our belief of Transubstantiation, and a certain kind of Infallibility no body knows where; unless we will worship the Host, and Saints, and Images; and do many things directly repugnant to the Word of God. Therefore we can't

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communicate with Her, unless we should partake of Her gross and superstitious Errors. But the Church of England does not exact any thing from us, that God has forbidden: therefore we may Communicate with Her without Sin: and if we may, it must be a sin in us, if we do it not. We transgress the Divine Law, which requires us to obey all human Ordinances for the Lord's sake.

The *Establiſh'd, National Church* is the proper Center of Union. This *Church* is divided into so many *Parish Churches*, each having a *lawful Pastor* over it. Whosoever keeps to these, keeps the *unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*: He maintains *publick Charity*, observes the order of *Establiſh'd Laws*, keeps his *rank*, and holds his *place*, where the *Laws* and *right Reason* have fix'd him. But as for the *separate Meetings*, gather'd out of *Parish-Churches*, they break all *publick order*, destroy *Charity*, affront the *Laws*; and may be as *Pernicious* to the *Church*, as *Rebellion* is to the *State*.

Neither will your *Notion* of *Unscriptural terms* make either our *Communion* *sinful*, or your *Separation* *necessary*. I have shewn before the *Power* of our *Church-Governours* in things *indifferent*, or *undetermin'd* by the *Word* of *God*. And, if any *less* than *sinful Terms* of *Communion* can justify a *Separation*, then there can be no end of *Separation*.

And, that you don't think our *Terms* of *Communion* *sinful*, may be reasonably concluded from what you say of your *sometimes communicating Occasionally* with us. If it be a *sin*, you shou'd not do it at all: once to commit a *wilful known* sin is too much. The consideration of the *Divine Justice* shou'd awe you from it. But here you say, *you do it to shew your Charity, and that you own us to be a true Church of Christ*. But may you do *evil* that good may come thereof? And may you not as well justify your shewing *another* branch of *Charity*, by stealing from *One*, to give to *Another*?

The truth of it is, you know well enough, that a *Man* may *Communicate* with us without *sin*: And therefore, for a place of *Trust* or *Profit*, and to keep up your interest in the *Government*, you'll allow your *Proselytes* to do it. But
least

least from *Occasional*, they shou'd come to *constant Communion*, you except against many things, and cry out upon *Human Inventions*, *Will-worship*, and *Superstition*, like the practice of *Pope Gregory the seventh*, who call'd the *Married Clergy*, *Nicolaitans*, tho' the accounts the *Antients* give us of that *Seet*, say nothing of this matter.

Thus, Sir, I have gone through that part of your *Letter* which concerns me, and (I hope) have consider'd every thing that is *material* in it. As for what related to my *Brother*, He (being of Age) has answer'd for *Himself*.

And now, by way of *Requital* for your kindness, give me leave to advise you to consider, whether the *Cause* you engage in be such, as will bear you out at the *last Day*. By setting up *Altar* against *Altar*, you occasion Persons to *Separate* from that *Communion*, to which they properly belong: And you ought to be sure you are in the *Right*, before you make a *Rent* and *Division* in the *Church*. If you shou'd be *mistaken*, and have not, by all *due* means endeavoured *better* to inform your self, you are in a *High* measure *Partaker* of other mens sins, and *Answerable* for all the mischiefs that follow the *Divisions* which are among us.

And surely, these *Divisions* tend to the weakning of the *Nation*, and rendring it *Obnoxious* to the *ill-will*, or *Ambition* of any *publick Adversary*. They strengthen the Hands of the *Papists*, who have been always ready to foment them: They tend to the Destruction of *publick Charity*, bring a *Scandal* and *Reproach* upon *Religion* it self, and lay a *Stumbling-block* in the way of *Those*, that are *Atheistically* inclin'd.

These, and many more are the mischiefs of *Separation*. And you wou'd do well seriously to consider, whether it wou'd not be *Adviseable* for you to *Sacrifice* your little *Scruples* to the *Glory* of *God*, the *good* of *Souls*, the *well-fare* of the *Protestant Religion*, and *Settlement* of the *State*.

You may do more *good* in your *Generation* by returning to that *Communion*, whence you are fall'n, than you can possibly

possibly in the way you are now. All the *true Sons* of the *Church* are ready to receive you with *open Arms*, I might have said, with joy and thankfulness. The *Old Non-conformists*, who were heretofore hamper'd with *wicked Leagues* and *Covenants*, are most of them *Dead*: and none of them can, by course of Years, continue long. And therefore, if you and those *other Gentlemen*, who have been *Prejudic'd* in your *Education*, wou'd be perswaded to Read, with impartiality, what is written on *both sides*, there wou'd be some hopes of our seeing an end of the *Schism* in this *present Generation*.

'Tis true, that you have now a *Toleration*. But there's a *vast Difference* between a *Toleration* and an *Establisment*. The *Toleration*, that the *Law* gives, does not alter the nature of things. It is only a *Declaration* that Men shall not be *Liable* to *temporal Mulcts* and *Penalties* for their *Non-conformity*. *Schism* is still *Schism*, notwithstanding the *Government*, for some reasons of *State*, thinks fit to *suspend* the *Penalty*. The Cause of *Separation* is the same that it was, and is neither *better* nor *worse*, whether the *Separation* be punish'd or not.

But if nothing will perswade you to join in *Communion* with us, and you must still uphold a *separate Congregation*; let me exhort you to confine your self within your *Bounds* and *Limits* of the *Toleration*; and to be very cautious of doing any thing that will cause disturbance in a *Parish*, where the *Dissenters* have hitherto been *civilly* us'd: and where we have liv'd more at *Peace*, than in most *other large Towns*, or than cou'd have been expected, considering the *Difference* among us in *Religious* matters.

The *Toleration* was design'd only for an *Ease* to *Tender* and *Scrupulous* Consciences. It gives *License* to no *Preacher* or *Teacher* whomsoever to *rail* and *revile*, to *speak* or *write* against the *Church* and *Common-Prayer*, either in his *Sermons*, or *elsewhere*. He must not raise *Scruples* where there's none, nor go about to seduce *People* from the *Establisht Ministry*, and their *own proper Minister*. The stretching your self thus beyond your *Line* may, perhaps in time, put *Persons* upon enquiring
whether

whether all those, who don't observe the Conditions of the *Indulgence*, be not as *Liable* to the Law, as if they had none.

Intemperate Zeal, and the *Itch* of Disputing have done great mischief to *Religion*. *Hannibal ad Portas*——

The Enemy watches but till our *Divisions* shall open the Gates to him. And that Man suffer'd *unpity'd*, who having set fire to his Neighbour's House, soon after found his own (tho' at some distance) all in Flames by a spark from thence. If it be possible, and as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men, is an *Apostolical* Precept well worth your observation.

I have nothing further to add, but to let you know, that what is here written is by the *Advice* and *Direction* of my *Pastor*, tho', at the same time, I must declare, that it is entirely *Agreeable* to my Own Sentiments.

I am

Your Humble Servant,

F. B.

A REPLY to the first part of the Preface, which concerns the fore-going Letter.

NOW comes out a Paper, which the *Author* wou'd have thought a *Vindication of Mr. England's Letter*, and yet is call'd a *Preface*. I cannot but commend his modesty in chusing rather to call it by *that* name, than of a *Reply* either to the *Dialogue* written against it, or to my *Letter*, for he is pleas'd to make but *few Animadversions* on the *one* or the *other*.

Now *this Mr. Prefacer* (so I'll call him, tho' I believe I cou'd hit on his *proper name*) chiefly aims at my *Letter* to the *middle* of pag. 18. And for any thing I can see (besides his complaints of *hard usage*, &c.) has but *two* things by way of *Answer* to it, which deserve *Consideration*. The *first* relates to what I said of his *mis-applying* the *main Principle* of his Discourse: The *next*, of the *Doubtfulness* of his being *Regularly* commission'd either to *Preach* the *Gospel*, or *Administer* the *Sacraments*.

But before I enter upon these matters, I am willing to do Mr. E--g--nd so much Right, as to consider the *Prefacer's* Complaints of *hard usage* upon the Occasion of his *Letter*.

He complains of Mr. F. B. exposing a *private Letter* written to him as a Friend, not so much to get him back to the *Meeting*, as to discharge his *own Duty* in reclaiming him from some *ill* practices; which I presume, is his meaning, when he tells us, *He was mov'd to this Course by the words of the Prophet Ezechiel* (Chap. 3. Ver. 17, 18, 19.)

Now since Mr. E. has been so kind to the World, as to Print his *Letter*, I desire any Man of common Sense but

to read it carefully over, and then tell me what he judges his *main* drift is.

'Tis true, in the Beginning of it he expresses a great desire for the *welfare* of his Soul; and brings a great many *Texts* of *Scripture* to prove, that every Man ought to be very careful in a matter of such great Importance. And withall tells him, that 'tis not our being of this or that Church, that will save our Souls. But then (says he) tho' 'tis not our being of this or that Communion, that will carry us to Heaven, considered in it self; yet it is not an indifferent thing, what Church or Communion we are of: For 'tis our Duty to take the best care, we possibly can, of our Souls Salvation, &c. pag. 3. to the end of that Paragraph. And in the next, let us now see (says he) whether, or no, you comply with this Duty; whether you serve God in the best Manner you are Able. And so, he immediately defends to his *Objecting* Questions against the *Establis'd* Communion. To instance in no more than pag. 8. when he tells him, that his warm Affections, and lively Convictions all vanish'd as the Morning dew, he concludes with his leaving the Meeting-house, as the summit of his wickedness: And now you are quite gone off from us! Subjoyning that of the Apostle, If any Man draw back, my Soul (saith God) shall have no Pleasure in him. The meaning of which place is too Clear to need any Comment.

So that, if we may guess at Mr. E's meaning by his words, his main design in writing this Letter was to bring back his lost Disciple to the Meeting. What else you see there, looks but like a Vehicle for a bitter Pill, or Guy Faux's Cloak to hide the Lanthorn.

But besides what is suggested by the general Tenour of Mr. F. B's. life, and the fair Character he has among those that know him, I am confirm'd in this Opinion, from his telling me; that when he left the Meeting, Mr. E—— put into his hands a small Book, stil'd A Letter from some Aged Non-conformist Ministers to their Christian Friends, touching the Reason of their Practice. He came also to his house, and persuaded him to return to their Communion, without charging him with any other fault or misdemeanour. Besides, I cou'd tell (was there occasion) where this Gentleman

man made, in Person, the like attempt upon one that left his Congregation to go to the *Establiſh'd Church*.

2. Next, the *Prefacer* complains, that Mr. *F.B.* expos'd his *Letter* in all publick places, and gave out, that he wou'd prosecute the *suppos'd Author*. As to the *first*, he assures me that he never shew'd his *Letter* to any One but his *Brother*; which he thought Mr. *E.* in the *Letter* gave him sufficient allowance to do. His *Brother* indeed shew'd it to me, and several other Persons: And cou'd the Gentleman think, that so high a Church-man (as he represents him) wou'd not do it, especially when he was therein so scurrilously abus'd, and highly calumniated by him? And as for Mr. *F. B.* giving out that he wou'd prosecute him, he declares, that he never spoke one word tending that way, and that it never enter'd into his heart.

3. Again, Mr. *Prefacer* complains of *misrepresenting* and *perverting* the sense of the *Letter*. What those, who knew it not, might say, I cannot tell. But I'll challenge him or any other Person to shew me, where I did it. Whether he has not been hard upon the *Establiſh'd Church*, and its Members, I'll leave to the *unprejudic'd Reader*, and desire him withall to consider whether the *Letter* does not contradict the *Preface*.

But the *Prefacer*, in behalf of his beloved and admir'd Friend Mr. *E.* saies, That he has manag'd his whole Reasoning by way of *Query*. But who knows not, that such *Queries* have the force of a strong Affirmation? And because this Gentleman instances in a Passage of Mr. *E.* concerning *mixt Communion* (pag. 6th.) I will be bold to say that Mr. *E.* does take the liberty to affirm, that they who receive the Sacrament in the Church of England, cannot avoid sometimes partaking with Prophane and Immoral Persons, such as Prophane Swearers, Sabbath-breakers, Drunkards, &c. And whoever says to the contrary, as Mr. *Prefacer* does (pag. 13.) must either not consider what he says, or not understand plain sense; or prevaricate.

Mr. *E.* in a Sermon of his concerning the Reformation of Manners, before told us, what an indifferent Opinion he

had of our Church-men. Pag. 30. He has this memorable passage. *When we see some Persons thus Zealous about lesser matters, Jehu like driving on with a Furious Zeal, and at the same time to have no Regard for God's Honour; to be Careless and Indifferent whether God's Law, and the great things of it be observ'd yea or no; it is a Temptation to many to believe, that there is more than a Ceremony that is the Difference between the Church and the Meeting: and that a Separation is in some sort Necessary to keep up the Power of Religion.*

But not to waste too much time upon these things, I come now to the two most considerable branches of Mr. Prefacer's discourse. And will first take notice of what he says to confirm his Principle, by way of Answer to my charging him with mis-applying it.

And here, I cannot but Reflect upon the Usage the Church of England has from two sorts of Men, the Papists and the Dissenters. The First charge her with paying too much Regard to the Holy Scriptures: the latter with too little, tho' I think she has very handsomly defended her-self against Both.

The Papists (as is observ'd by Dr. Puller) detract from the true Perfection of Scripture, by declaring that the Apocryphal Writings, and Traditions of Men are nothing inferior to, nor less Canonical than the Sovereign dictates of God; as well for the Confirmation of Doctrinal points pertaining to Faith, as for ordering of Life and Manners; and that both the one and the other ought to be embrac'd with the same affection of Piety, and receiv'd with the like Religious reverence, not making any Difference between them.

On the other hand, they of the Separation among us, are busie to attribute, to the Holy Scriptures, such a Perfection as God never intended them: viz. Particularly to Determine of all the Actions of Man-kind, and every matter of Order and Decency in Religion.

Between these two Extremes, see by how even a Thread our Church divides the Controversy; she asserts the real Perfection of Scripture in order to its great end, namely, to guide our Belief and Practice in things needful to Salvation: and
thankfully

thankfully accepts of that *Christian Liberty* which God hath left her, and all other Churches, to determine the particular Actions of men, as may be seen in the *twentieth Article*.

Those Gentlemen, who say nothing must be done in the *Worship* of God, but what he has commanded (how great respect, and veneration soever they pretend to have for the *Holy Scriptures*) may be more rationally charg'd with adding thereto, than the *Church of England* can; they advance a *Proposition*, which has no *Foundation* there, and which draweth after it many dangerous Consequents, and Evil Effects, a World of *Superstitions*, *Uncharitable Censures*, *bitter Contentions*, contempt of *Superiours*, and *Perplexities* of *Conscience*. As God himself is Perfect, so his *Holy Word* is so full of all requisite Perfection, that it needs not to beg Honour from an *untruth*.

To come then more closely to the business. The Heads I went on in Reference to Mr. E's. Principle were these three. First, that all Circumstances relating to the *Worship* and *Service* of God, are not particularly determin'd in the *Holy Scriptures*. Secondly, that the *Governours* of the *Church* have Power to determine these matters. Thirdly, that the *People* are bound to obey them in such their determinations. And surely, the *Prefacer* shou'd have consider'd these in their order; or at least before he had done any thing else, shou'd have shewn where all the *Circumstances*, relating to the *Worship* and *Service* of God under the *Gospel*, are determin'd in *Holy Scripture*. This wou'd have sav'd him a great deal of trouble, the other two wou'd drop of course, and I wou'd have given up the Case to him without any more ado, owning heartily that both the *Governours* of our *Church*, and the *People* are to Conform to these Rules.

But this is too difficult a Task; and therefore, instead of it, he endeavours to be waggish, and to sport with the *Magistrates* Power. "Suppose (says he) the *Magistrate* shou'd command me to Marry such a *Woman*, to put my Son an Apprentice to such a *Trade*, to have such a *Lawyer* to manage my Cause, or such a *Physician* to cure my *Distemper*, &c. "If I had different apprehensions of the matter, I shou'd crave leave to chuse for my self. And so shou'd the *Magistrate* com-

“*command me to go to his Church, and worship God in that way which he thinks best.*——Hold, Sir, Is there no Difference in these matters? Did ever any *King of England* thus concern *himself* in the *Domestick* affairs of his *Subjects*? Or is it *possible* for him to do so? He is the *Father* of his *Country*, and the *Head* of the *Church*. And what *Power* the *Father* has over his *Children*, or the *Master* over his *Servants*, for the ordering their *Respective* *Families*, the same the *Supreme Magistrate* has over his *Subjects*, for the *publick* *Peace* and *welfare* of *Church* and *Common-wealth*. Such a *Power* of *Magistrates* and *Church Governours* in a *Church* and *State* so well constituted as *ours* is, is for *Edification* and the *Good* of the *People*, not their *Hurt*, whatever you may think to the contrary.

And indeed, if the *Magistrate* has any *Power* at all in *Church matters*, it must be in *things Indifferent*. For *things absolutely Necessary*, as commanded by *God*, we are bound to do, whether *human Authority* require them or no. And *things absolutely Unlawful*, as prohibited by *God*, we are bound not to do, whether *human Authority* forbid them or no. There are no *other* things left then, wherein to express properly the *Obedience due* to *Magistrates* and *Church-Governours*, than these *Indifferent things*, such as *Rites* and *Ceremonies*, *Gestures*, *Habits*, &c. which are *Variable pro hic & nunc*: that is, with respect to *Time* and *Place*, according to the *Customs* and *Fashions* of the *Age* we live in.

But here *Mr. Prefacer* distinguishes upon us, and says that the *Circumstances* of *worship* are of *two* sorts; *Simple* and *Mixt*. By *simple circumstances*, he tells us he understands such *circumstances* of *Worship* which are in *general* commanded in *Scripture*; but as to their *particular Determination* are left to *Church-Governours* to *fix* and *determine*, as the *Necessity* or *Conveniency* of the *Church* doth require. Of which kind (he reckons) are the *circumstances* of *Time* and *Place*, and such like. And touching the *Power* of *Church Governours* in this case (he owns) there is no *Dispute*. But now (to go on with his own words) *mixt-circumstances* are of another nature, and of these only is our present *Controversie*. By *mixt circumstances* (says he) I understand such *Rites* and *Ceremonies*,

nies, which either are not, or cannot be enjoyn'd or observ'd, without the injunction or observation of something new added to the matter of God's Worship. And here we refer the Cross in Baptism, turning to the East, bowing at the Name of Jesus, bowing towards the Altar at our coming in, or going out of the Church, and such like. Now we think (says he) Church Governours go beyond their Line, if they take upon them to enjoyn these things; because in such Injunctions, there is something added to the matter of God's Worship, which he has not requir'd.

An Unscriptural distinction this; And I wou'd call it a simple one too, did I not think it craftily fram'd to amuze the Ignorant, and perpetuate the Schism. Heretofore, the distinction ran between natural Circumstances, and Symbolical, and significant Rites; And the Latter were adjudg'd sinful, and not to be Comply'd with, because such. But this way being sufficiently exploded, they come now to simple and Mixt: which is but the same thing in other Terms, and an Argument of disingenuous dealing. For, either these mixt Ceremonies are Parts of God's worship, or they are not. If they are Parts of God's worship, then they cannot be Ceremonies in the Receiv'd Notion of that word in the Case between us. But if they are not, then here is a Distinction without a Difference; so that the Prefacer (if he had pleas'd) might have reckon'd his mixt among his simple Circumstances. I am sure, we desire no more in their behalf, than what he alledges for his simple Circumstances, which he tells us, are in general Commanded in Holy Scripture, but as to their particular Determination are left to Church Governours to fix and determine, as the Necessity and Convenience of the Church doth require.

'Tis true, the Scriptures only prescribe general Rules about such matters, that so particular Laws may be deduc'd from them. As for instance, 'tis one Apostolical Law or Canon, that all things be done for Edification: And another, that all things be done Decently and in Order. But what will tend to Edification, or what is Decent and Orderly is not there determin'd, but left wholly to the Determination of Ecclesiastical Laws. So we are commanded to worship

ship God, but whether it must be done by *Kneeling, Standing, or Prostration*, the Custom of the Nation, and the prudence of our Governours must determine. We know, that all these Modes have been in use, according to the Fashions of several Countreys.

There is but one Ceremony enjoyn'd by the Church of England, which cannot be reckon'd among the necessary Circumstances of Action: and that is the Cross after Baptism: And yet this may be reduc'd to those general Rules. But the Surplice, *Kneeling at Prayers*, and at the Lords Supper; *Standing up at the Hymns*, the *Gloria Patri*, the *Creed* and the *Gospels*; *Bowing at the Name of Jesus*, are nothing more than the Circumstances of Religious Actions, unless it be Decent to worship God naked, or possible to worship him in no posture at all.

And that it is necessary to Determine these matters, may easily appear to any Person, who looks but slightly into it. The Fancies of Men are so infinitely Different as to such things, that one wou'd like this Habit, another that: One wou'd be for *Kneeling* in receiving the Sacrament; another for *sitting*, and perhaps a third for *Standing*. One wou'd have his Child sign'd with the Sign of the Cross; Another wou'd protest against it, &c. What Confusions and Schisms wou'd this cause in the Church? Every one wou'd contend for the Prevalence of his own Model and Way: and there wou'd be no hearty Concord, no harmonious Consent in the service of God. There is therefore no other way to prevent these mischiefs, but that they who have the Government of the Church prescribe such Rules as they think most Agreeable to the general sense of Scripture, and that the People under them Conform themselves to their lawful Decision.

But, to shew more particularly, that this Distinction does no way affect the Ceremonies of our Church, I shall

I. Enquire what it is that makes a Ceremony a Part of God's Worship.

II. I shall shew, that the Ceremonies of our Church are no Parts of God's Worship.

III. I will represent the Custom of all Churches in observing such like Ceremonies.

IV. I

IV. I shall answer an *Objection* rais'd against allowing the *Church* a Power to decree such *Rites* and *Ceremonies*.

I. I am to shew what it is that makes a *Ceremony* a Part of *God's Worship*. New *Rites* do not make a new *Duty*, nor alter *God's Law*, or change his *Worship*. *Anything* added to the *Divine Institutions*, as *Essential* or *Substantial*, or *simply Necessary*, does change the *Worship* (says *Zanchy*) and make it another. But what are added only as things *Indifferent*, for *Order*, for *Decency*, and to *Edification*, they change not the *Substance* of the *Sacraments*, nor the *Nature* of the *Worship*.

Adoration is a *substantial* and *proper Act* of *Divine Worship*. But whether this *Adoration* be perform'd by *Prostration*, by *Bowing*, or by *Kneeling*, is a *Circumstance* in it self *Indifferent*. And therefore, when *Church Governours* enjoin the one or the other, they cannot be said to set up new parts of *Worship*, but to determine the *Manner* of *Performance*. Yea, the *Worship* of *God* is not thereby either chang'd or adulterated; neither is there any *Addition* made to it; but the *Substance* of the *Worship* is still in *Conformity* to *God's Laws*, when yet the *outward* and *indifferent* manner of it is in *Conformity* to *Man's*. Certainly, it is no *Addition* to *Baptism* to give a *Name* to the *Baptiz'd*, tho' we find no *express Command* for it. And I much wonder, among our *carping Brethren*, some or other had not scrupled this, as well as another *Observance*.

If a *Ceremony* be made a *substantial* Part of *God's Worship*, and *unalterable*, or be suppos'd so *Necessary*, that the doing of it wou'd be a thing *Pleasing* and *Meritorious* to *God*, and the not doing of it *Sinful*, tho' there were no *human Law*, which requir'd the doing of it; then the use of it becomes *Sinful*, because it makes the *Scriptures* *Insufficient*.

And this is what our *Blessed Lord* found fault with in the *Observances* of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* of *Old*, and we still do in the *Church* of *Rome*. But because our *Case* is parallel'd with both theirs, I shall enquire distinctly into them, and represent the *Difference*.

1. *First* then, This is what our *Blessed Lord* (*St. Matt. XV.*) found fault with in the Observances of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, who taught for *Doctrines* the *Commandments of Men*; He reprov'd them not so much for their frequent *Washings*, as for supposing that a *Man's Conscience* was defil'd, if he did not observe them: not because a thing in it self *Unnecessary* was determin'd by their *Superiours*, but because of the *superstitious* Opinions which they had conceiving this *washing*, with respect to the *Consciences* of Men. He that eateth Bread with *Unwashen Hands* (says *Rabbi Ase*, as I find him quoted by one of our *Doctors*) sins as grievously as if he lay with a *Whore*. Now we all know that *Fornication* is sinful in its own nature, and not only because 'tis forbidden by *Superiors*. *Maimonides* (as the same *Learned Man* observes) says, They look'd upon it as a peculiar piece of *Sanctity*, and that whosoever dis-esteem'd this Custom [viz. of washing] deserv'd not only *Excommunication* but *Death* it self.

This is further Apparent from the *Doctrine* which our *Lord* opposes to what he here condemns, viz. that to eat with *unwashen Hands* defileth not a *Man*, as you may see, verse 11. Not that which entreteth into the Mouth, defileth a *Man*; but that which cometh out of the Mouth, this defileth a *Man*. Which signified nothing, unless the Opinion among them was that eating bread with *unwashen Hands*, did really defile a *Man's conscience* towards *God*. So that they look'd upon this Ceremony, as a part of *God's Worship*, equal to the *Law* it self, and which Men pleas'd *God* by doing, and displeas'd him by omitting; not merely with Respect to the Command of *Superiours*, but as they suppos'd some lesser Guilt upon the *Conscience* might be expiated by it.

2. *Secondly*, Alike Faulty are the *Papists* in many of their Observances. The *Church of Rome* enjoyns no indifferent things as such, but as made *Necessary* by *Divine Authority*; she pretending to the *Infallible Guidance* of the *Holy Ghost* in all her *Decrees* and *Constitutions*: And therefore expects your Receiving them as you do the *Holy Scriptures*

tures with a *Divine Faith*, and the self same *Awful* regard and reverence.

I might add too, that *several* of her *Rites* and *Ceremonies* are impos'd under a most *Superstitious* Notion, as having some *special* Virtue in them to atone the *Divine Majesty*, or to scare away the *Devil*; to purifie and cleanse the Souls of Men, not for *Justification* from *Mortal Sins*, but for other *Spiritual Effects*, and taking away the guilt of *Venial Sins*. There are three wonderful Effects of the *Cross* (says *Bellarmino*) First, it frights and scares away the *Devil*. Secondly, it drives away *Diseases* and all *Evils*. Thirdly, it sanctifies those things, upon which it is made. *Azorius* tells us, That *Holy Water* cleanseth *Venial Sins*, ex opere operato, i. e. from the work done: and drives away the *Devil*. Where such *Opinions* prevail concerning *Ceremonies*, they are made parts of *Divine Worship*. But,

II. The *Ceremonies* enjoyn'd in our *Church* are no *Parts* of *God's Worship*. The nature of the *Ceremonies* is to be learn'd from the *Doctrine* which goes along with them. Now our *Church* has been particularly careful to express her meaning in this Case. She publickly declares that her *Constitutions* concerning *Indifferent things* are made without any *Opinions*, or *absolute Necessity* of them. Yea, All are admonish'd to consider that *God* is not appear'd by them, much less that *Grace* is *Merited* by them, or *Satisfaction* made for sins.

The *Ceremonies* that remain, (as the *Preface* to the *Liturgy* expresses it) are retain'd for *Godly Discipline*, and *Order*, which upon just causes may be chang'd, and therefore are not to be esteem'd equal to *God's Law*. And the *Preface*, that was made upon the last Establishment, says, The particular *Forms* of *Divine Worship*, and the *Rites* and *Ceremonies* appointed to be used therein, are things, in their own nature, *Indifferent* and *Alterable*, and so acknowledg'd. Yea, our *Church* declares, that every *Country* is at *Liberty* to use their own *Ceremonies*, and that She neither condemns others, nor prescribes to them.

The *Church* then having made this *Declaration*, 'tis very *Uncharitable* to Parallel our *Ceremonies*, either with those of

the Scribes and Pharisees, or with those of the Church of Rome. *Circumstances of Worship* they may be, but *parts* they never can. The Church, by imposing them, adds nothing to the *Substance of God's Worship*, but only provides that, which God has requir'd, to be perform'd in a *Decent and Orderly* manner.

And altho' the very *Commanding* them do seem to bring with it a kind of *Necessity*, and to lay a *Tye* upon the *Conscience* (as that of St. Paul implies both, *you must needs be Subject*, and that for *Conscience sake*) yet is not any *Tye* brought upon the *Conscience de Novo*, i. e. anew, by such *Command* of the Church: only that *Tye*, that lay upon the *Conscience* before, by virtue of that *general Command* of God of obeying the *higher Powers* in all their *lawful Commands*, is by that *Commandment* of the Church apply'd to that *particular Matter*; even as it is in all *civil Constitutions*, and all *humane Laws* whatsoever: And the *Necessity* also is an *Obediential*, not a *Doctrinal Necessity*. Necessary they are to be submitted to, because enjoyn'd by that *Authority* to which he has committed the *Care of the first Table*, as well as the *Second*; but not *necessary* in themselves, as *Immediate Parts* of *God's Worship*, or of such *Importance*, that the *Worship* of God were *imperfect*, and *Invalid* for the ends, for which it is appointed, were not these *Observances commanded and perform'd*.

If indeed we taught otherwise, the loudest of our *Adversaries* exclamations in calling our *Rites and Ceremonies*, *Additions to the Word of God*, *Will-worship*, *Superstition*, &c. wou'd not shew so much *Passion*, as a *just and rational Zeal*. But God forbid that any such *Ordinances* of Man shou'd ever be introduc'd into our Church. We all joyn in such a *Vote*, do renounce any such *Authority*, and deny any such *Practice*.

III. Come we now, in the *third Place*, to represent the *Custom* of all Churches in observing such like *Ceremonies*. And here, tho' I might be very large, yet I shall according to my *design'd brevity*, only touch at things.

If we look *first* into the *Jewish Oeconomy*, we shall find
that

that this was a *Liberty* allow'd to them. The eating of the *Passover* in a *different* Posture from that at its first Institution; the *Memorative* and *Engaging* Sign of the *Altar of witness*, built by the *two Tribes and half*, when they went over *Jordan* to their own Possession; their wearing *Sack-cloth* and *Ashes*, in token of *Humiliation*; the *Imposition of Hands* in their *Ordinary Benediction*, are plain Demonstrations of it. To these might be added those *two other known Rites* of the *Jews*, not commanded in the *Law*, viz. That in *joyning Baptism with Circumcision* in admitting *Profelytes*; and That of the *Feast after the Passover*; both which our *Blessed Lord* was so far from condemning upon the score of their being *human Institutions*, that his *two Sacraments* receiv'd their *Rite* from them.

Secondly, This was agreeable to the *Doctrine* and *Practice* of the *Apostles* in their *Religious Assemblies*, when the *Christian Church* not only comply'd with the *Jews* in such *Rites* as they are under no *Obligation*, but that of *Charity*, to use; but also had some *Observances* of its own that were of a *ritual nature*, and as they were taken up, so might be laid down upon *Prudential Considerations*. Such, I account, were the *Love-feasts* at the *Administration* of the *Lords Supper*; and the *Holy Kiss* us'd then among *Christians*, if not as a *constant Attendant* upon all *Publick Worship*, yet to be sure at *Prayer*. Beside these, the *Apostles* direction for men to *Pray* or *Prophecy* with their *Heads uncover'd*, was the determining an *External Rite* for *Order* and *Decency*, and not without some *Respect* to the *common Expressions* of *Reverence* in *Greece*, and other parts of the *Roman Empire*. And by this and other instances of the same kind, he has left an *Example* to *Governours* of the *Church* in all *Ages* to prescribe *Rules* of *Decency* upon the like *Occasion*.

Thirdly, Accordingly we find that the *Primitive Christians*, in the *next Ages* after, as they observ'd some *Rites* which had been introduc'd before, so they added others, when they thought it requisite. They appointed that the *Gesture* of *Prayer* shou'd be sometimes *Kneeling*, and sometimes

times *Standing* (for which they distinguish'd the *proper seasons*;) and that the *Congregation* shou'd turn their *Faces* toward the *East*. They observ'd the *Anniversary Solemnities* of the *Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ*, and *Descent of the Holy Ghost*. They requir'd that the *Baptiz'd* shou'd be dipp'd *thrice* in the water, as a *symbolical Ceremony*, to signify the *Doctrine of the Trinity*, or the *Death and Resurrection of Christ* after *three Days*. They sign'd the *Persons Baptiz'd* with the *sign of the Cross*, and us'd the *Imposition of hands* in *Confirmation*. And surely, if Men wou'd learn once to be *charitable, modest, and humble*; they wou'd not be so *forward* (as they are now a-days) to *Censure* the generally receiv'd *Practices* in the *best times of Christianity*.

Fourthly, If you enquire into the *Customs* of the *Protestants* abroad; you'll find, that they have *All* made some *Ecclesiastical Laws* for *External Order and Discipline*, to which they require *Obedience* from *all* of their own *Communion*, tho' these *particular Laws* are not *express'd* in the *Word of God*, provided they be not *Repugnant* to it.

The *Lutheran Churches* have not only the *same*, but more *Ceremonies* than we have: And yet a *national Assembly*, of the late *Reform'd Churches* of *France* held at *Charenton*, in the year 1631. declar'd, that *there is neither Idolatry nor Superstition in their Publick Worship*.

I thought to have instanc'd in several *Rites* enjoyn'd both among the *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*: But this wou'd too much lengthen my *Discourse*; and therefore I shall refer my *Reader* to *Mr. Durel's View of the Government and Publick Worship of God in the Reform'd Churches beyond the Seas*: a *Book* well worth his *Perusal*; and enough to shame our *Dissenting Brethren*, who upon every *Occasion*, twit us with the *Reform'd Churches* abroad.

To quote here the *Writings* of *Private Men* wou'd be an *endless task*: But yet the better to convince all *Gain-sayers*, I will bring in a *few Passages* out of *two* of them, which (I presume) will not be excepted against.

Mr. Calvin, in his *Treatise of the Right way of Reforming Churches*,

Churches, speaks thus : " Lest any Man shou'd raise a Ca-
 " lumny ——— I wou'd have all Pious Readers here to
 " bear me Witness that I do not contend about Ceremonies,
 " which serve only for Decency and Order ; nor yet a-
 " gainst such which are either Symbols of, or Incitements
 " to, that Reverence which we bear to God. I dispute
 " only of those works, which some Men falsely pretend to
 " be of themselves Pleasing to God, and Meritorious, and
 " to make Part of his Service.

And, why he shou'd leave every *Church* to her Liberty
 in such *outward* things, as are of themselves *Indifferent*, he
 gives this Reason in his *Institutions*, viz. " That God hath not
 " been pleas'd to prescribe every particular thing, that we
 " ought to follow, as to external Discipline and Ceremo-
 " nies ; because he fore-saw that those things were Varia-
 " ble with the times, and judg'd that the same Form wou'd
 " not agree with all Ages : Wherefore we ought to consult
 " the general Rules which he gave us, whereby to exa-
 " mine, and to fit, and settle those things that appertain to
 " Order and Decency, according as the Exigencies of the
 " Church require.

Among the *Lutherans*, the learn'd Gerard both acknow-
 ledges the Authority of the Church for the Ordaining some
 things about the External Part of Worship, and yields that
 not only the Church, but even the Apostles themselves, did in-
 stitute in the Church, some free, indifferent Rites, appertain-
 ing to Order and Decency, which in Specie, and in Particu-
 lar, are neither written, nor impos'd by a perpetual Law, as
 necessary for the whole Church (*Confes. Cathol.*) And in ano-
 ther place, he shews, that they readily receive these Indiffe-
 rent things for Order and Decency, tho' they only depend upon
 the Custom of the Church. So that these Men of Scruple, who
 upon the Score of Circumstantials in Worship, renounce
 Communion with the Church of England, must do the same
 with all Churches in the World ; in that there is not any
 one Church in Christendom, whose Laws and Customs are not
 apparently Liable to the same, or greater Exceptions.

Nay, what is more Notorious than all this, these Persons
 do not only condemn all Churches, both Antient and Mo-
 dern, but themselves too. The Solemn League and Covenant
 was heretofore, by an Ordinance of Parliament, appointed to
 be

be taken with these *three significant Ceremonies*, (1.) *With the Head Uncover'd*. (2.) *Standing*. (3.) *With the right Hand lift up Bare*. Now this was look'd upon by them as a *considerable Act of Divine Worship and Religious Adoration*, the entering into a *Solemn League and Covenant with Almighty God*, as they Phraz'd it. Now I wou'd beg them to consider, whether every one of their own Pleas of the *Scriptures sufficiency* in these matters, have any of the *least Force* against the *Ceremonies of the Church*, which they have not against this *prescrib'd Formality of their own in taking the Covenant?*

What ever the *Presbyterians* now adays talk of *Christian Liberty*, they were as much for *Uniformity* then, as ever we were. Among many *Instances* that might be given, I shall recommend to you this one, taken out of a *Book*, *Licens'd by Mr. John Downham*, call'd an *Allarm by way of Answer to the last warning Piece* (pag. 15.) "No Man endued with right Reason, but will say there is a Necessity of a Government; if of a Government, then of an Uniformity, else it will be confus'd. Therefore there is a necessity to suppress all Conventicles, and that all Men shou'd observe such Order, Time, Place, and publick Gesture, as the Parliament (by advice of the Assembly) shall appoint. And no Man, that hath any use of Conscience in any thing, but will acknowledge he is bound in Conscience to obey the Laws of the Land in which he lives, in all Indifferent things; or he is Turbulent, and deserves Censure, even for matters concerning Worship. He that hath the use of Conscience will make Conscience of the Duties of both Tables, as well as One. There is doubtless a Conscience towards God and towards man: This was the Apostles Practice, and must be our Rule, *Acts* 24. 16. *I exercise my self to have always a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Man*. Now I hope they will All grant, that what was *Sense and Reason* then, is the same still.

And if we look into some Usages of our *Dissenters* at this time, we shall find that they are not *Agreeable* to their Principle. They have no more *Authority*, nor can give more Reason for them, than we do for the things they condemn. Where do they find, that the *Baptiz'd Person* is *Necessarily* to be *Sprinkl'd*? What *Command* have they for

Sitting

Sitting at the Lords Supper, or so much as an Example? What can they shew for the Necessary use of conceiv'd Prayer, and why that, and no other, shou'd be us'd in the publick Worship of God? What Command have they for observing the Fifth of November for a Thanksgiving; and other occasional Fasts and Festivals, any more, than for observing the Thirtieth of January for a Fast, the Feast of Christ's Nativity, and the other stated Fasts and Feasts of the Church?

But to trouble you with no more of these, see what Mr. Baxter says of the Error of demanding *Scripture-text*, or *Rule* for Ceremonies and Circumstances of God's *Worship*, in his *Defence of the Principles of Love*; "There are Men" (says he) otherwise very Honest and truly Godly, who "think that the Scripture is intended by God, not only as a General, but a Particular Law or Rule for all the very Circumstances of Worship: And that the Second Commandment, in particular condemns all that is the Invention of Men, in or about the Worship of God; and that to deny this, is to deny the Perfection of Scripture.—— I hope, the Number is but small that are of this Opinion. We are oblig'd to take heed of Countenancing this Error —— For if it prevail, what abundance of hurt will it do? And so he reckons up the evil Consequences of it, much the same with those I have already hinted at; *Censuring, Scrupulosity, &c.* you have heard (I presume) of the disturb'd Fancy of that poor *Scrupulous* Man, who cut out of his Bible the contents of the Chapters, and so wou'd cut out the word of God it self on the other side of the Page, rather than suffer any *Human* mixture with the *Pure Word* of God.

IV. I am to answer an Objection against allowing the Church a Power to decree such Rites and Ceremonies, as we have been pleading for. And that you may find, pag. 9. in these words; *we think the same Power that enjoyneth these things, might also enjoyn, if it thought fit, not only the Cross, but the other Ceremonies that are used in Baptism by the Papists, such as the Chrism, the Spittle, the Salt, the Taper, &c.* —— *She may decree a Hundred.*

This is look'd upon as a shrew'd Objection; and yet all that it amounts to is, *that such a Power may possibly be abus'd.* But it is not well argued from the abuse of a Power, to the

nullity of it. It has been always suppos'd that a Parliament had a *Power* of granting *Money* upon the Subject: But if any shou'd *refuse* to give *four Shillings* to the Pound this year, because the next they may give *Eight*; and the year after that *Twelve*; and so on; such a fond surmise wou'd never be thought to have force enough to deprive them of their undoubted Right.

And I admire, why these Men will, at any time, observe an *Occasional Fast*. For how do they know, but from *once a year*, it may come to *once a Month*, from *once a Month* to a *weekly Fast*, and at length to every *other Day* in the Week?

Who knows not the great *Moderation* of the Church of *England*, in her Ceremonies? Those that she retains are, as *St. Austin* wou'd have them, *few in Number, easie in Practice, and apt in Signification.* She adorns her Religion with *orderly Decency*, avoiding the *slovenly Nakedness* of some, and the *pompous Superstition*, and *empty Formality* of others.

'Twill be time enough to complain, when we feel the Distemper growing; when vain senseless indecent Ceremonies, or abundance of any sort, are like to be introduc'd among us. 'Tis dangerous to tamper with Physick, when we find our selves in perfect Health. Every extravagant Jealousie of what may happen hereafter ought not to shake what is well Establish'd at present. For if the contrary Principle shou'd be allow'd, it were impossible (says one) for any Church, or State in the world, ever to enjoy one Minutes Repose.

But whoever reads the Opinion of our Church in this matter, as may be seen at large in her *Declaration of Ceremonies*, why some are abolish'd, and some retain'd, will have no reason to suspect this increase of Number, as is there suggested. For she gives a particular Reason against this multiplying of Ceremonies; because the very Number of them, supposing them lawful, is a Burden: Of which *St. Austin* complain'd in his time, and others had much more cause since; and therefore many were taken away. And withal, it is there declar'd, that *Christ's Gospel is not to be a Ceremonial Law.* Ceremonies, like the *Ivy*, where they are suffer'd to grow too luxuriant, eat out the heart of that Religion, about which they twine.

Besides,

Besides, there is not the same reason for introducing the things mention'd by Mr. Prefacer, as for the Ceremonies in use among us. Our Church propos'd to retain none but what were for *Decency, Order, and Edification*: And those she put away was, because some she judg'd *Unlawful*, others of *dark Signification*, and most of them so far abus'd, that the abuse cou'd not well be taken away, the things yet remaining, as is again express'd. And surely, she will not contradict her Doctrine; which she must do, if she takes in those Ceremonies above mention'd.

There is no doubt, but we shou'd find these or the like Reasons given by the Famous Bishop *Andrews* to the *Politick Cardinal*, if the Gentleman wou'd be pleas'd to tell us, where he had the Story of the dispute he mentions between them, pag. 9. Certainly that Learned Man was able to do it. And in his Exposition of the Decalogue, Pag. 209, 210. you may find he has done it. In Ceremonies (says he) *there are these Rules, or Cautions to be observ'd.*

1. That they be not over many, and that those which be enjoyn'd, be necessary according to the Time and Place wherein we live, according to the Apostles Example, who enjoyn'd few things to those believing Gentiles.

2. That the Ceremonies, enjoyn'd, be for Edification, and not Destructive to that which the Substance builds, and sets up. And this is the Apostle's Counsel, Let all things be done to Edifying. For a destroyer (according to this Rule) is a Transgressor. And in this Respect it is, that the same Apostle prohibits Prayer in an unknown Tongue.

3. That they be such as conduce to Order; to which all things must be squar'd according to Order (as the same Apostle,) else there will be confusion in the Church: And God is not the Author of confusion.

4. That they be for Decency; they must be such as make for the Decent Service of God. And therefore it is, that the Apostle inveigh'd against covering the Head and Face in Religious exercises. It was an uncomely, and undecent thing for Men to be

cover'd, or *Women uncover'd in the Church.* A little lower ~~Physicians say, it is the way to breed Diseases to mingle the Sick with the Sound.~~ Therefore that Form of outward worship is to be kept, which hath no Repugnancy to God's Word. And near the end, he has this Rule, which concerns the Magistrate: *They who are in Authority, must enjoin that which is True and Lawful, and abolish that which is False and Ungodly.* Moses took the Calf, burnt it in the Fire, and ground it to Powder: And Hezekiah brake the brazen Serpent. These things, apply'd with the Bishops Judgment, wou'd have gone near to have puzzled the Cardinal.

Thus I have examin'd whatever the Prefacer has said in behalf of Mr. E's Principle, and am sorry that Men shou'd Sacrifice the Peace and Welfare of the Church to such little shifts and lamentable Scruples. As to the case of mixt-Communion mention'd, pag. 14. I find nothing particularly objected deserving Consideration, which may not be answer'd by what you'l meet with on that head in the preceding Letter, pag. — And I need not support that, which stands firm and unshaken.

I come now, in the *Second* place, to consider how Mr. Prefacer can vindicate Mr. E's being *duly* qualify'd, either to Preach the Gospel or Administer the Sacraments.

The Person, for whom I wrote, gives Mr. E. the Reason of leaving the Meeting-House, in these words. *I was terribly afraid of the sin of Schism; and knowing that you wanted Episcopal Orders, I much doubted, whether you were Regularly Commission'd either to Preach the Gospel, or Administer the Holy Sacraments, and therefore, &c.* Pag.

To give then as short an Answer as I can, to what the Prefacer offers upon this Head, I will,

- I. Shew the *Antiquity* of Episcopacy.
- II. Answer two Objections brought from Scripture.
- III. Vindicate what I said, of the *Reform'd* Clergy abroad, from the Prefacer's Objections.
- IV. That there is great Reason to doubt whether Mr. E. be *Regularly* commission'd either to Preach the Gospel, or Administer the Sacraments.

I. Then I will shew the *Antiquity* of Episcopacy. As God is a God of Peace and Order, so he instituted all things in

in his Church, as was most agreeable to good Order, and the peaceable Government thereof.

Now in all well constituted Governments, the Power of making Laws, ending Controversies, and giving Judgment, is not in every particular Man, but in some Select Officers, who are gradually one above another. Thus in the *Jewish* Polity, there were three distinct Orders of Men to Minister about Holy things, the *Levites*, the *Priests*, and the *High-Priest* whose Authority was Chief and above all.

And surely, Reason does plainly require such Subordinations among us Christians. Where all Ministers of a Church have equal and co-ordinate Power, 'tis scarce possible to preserve any durable concord, any decent Harmony in the Worship of God; to check odious *Scandals*, to prevent or repress baneful *Factions*, to guard our Religion from being over-spread with pernicious *Heresies*, to keep the Church from being shatter'd into numberless *Sects*, and thence from being crumbld into *nothing*.

And therefore our Blessed Lord and Saviour, having first made choice of twelve Apostles, afterward appointed Seventy other Disciples *not equal* to the Twelve, neither endued with so great Priviledges or Power. Hence we see that *Matthias* was, with great Solemnity, exalted from the *other Order* to the *Apostleship*.

These twelve *Apostles*, after the Ascension of their Master, had the chief Government of the Church, and as there was occasion in every City, set up a *Bishop*, to whom as the number of Converts increas'd, was added afterwards a proportionable number of *Priests* and *Deacons*, who under the *Bishop*, were to take care of the several Cures in such a City, and the neighbouring Villages depending on it. And from the City the *Bishop* sent out *Presbyters* (as there was occasion) into the several remote parts of his Diocese to preach, administer the Sacraments, and do other things pertaining to the *Priestly* Office. In all the Churches of *Asia* mention'd by Antiquity, there was in the Age of *Ignatius*, who liv'd in the Apostles time, a *Bishop*, a *Presbyter*, or College of *Presbyters* under him, who were sent forth to preach the Gospel in the Country. For *Parochial* Churches were built afterwards, as the number of Converts increas'd.

You

You see then that *Bishops* are the *Successors* of the *Apostles*, of *Divine, Apostolical* Institution, or in the words of *Irenæus*, *The Apostles committed the care of the Church to them, and left them to succeed them in their Places.* Their business was to constitute Churches, to make Laws for the Ordering and Governing them, to ordain others, and to Superintend over them, for the regulating and well demeaning of them in their Places and Functions.

This Power was deliver'd by *St. Paul* to *Timothy* and *Titus*, the former Bishop of *Ephesus*, and the latter of *Crete*. Thus *Timothy* was appointed to examine the Qualifications of such as were to be ordain'd, and not to lay hands suddenly on any: to receive accusations, if there were cause, even against *Elders*: to proceed Judicially before two or three Witnesses: and if there were reason, to give them Publick Rebuke. And so, *Titus* also is requir'd to set in Order the things that are wanting, and to Ordain *Elders* in every City: to rebuke evil Doers sharply, and stop the Mouths of such as teach what they ought not, yea and to rebuke them with all Authority, not suffering his Monitions to be slighted; as you may see particularly in *St. Paul's* Epistles to them.

And if you search into the Records of the *Primitive Church*, you have the *Bishops* nam'd, who were Constituted by the *Apostles* themselves over the then famous Churches of *Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria*, and many other Churches, and the Succession of them down all along. *St. Polycarp* Bishop of *Smyrna* was Disciple to *St. John* the Apostle; and *St. Irenæus*, who was Disciple to *St. Polycarp*, was constituted Bishop of *Lyons* in *France*. I mention this, because it is so near us; for in all other Churches throughout the whole World, where-ever Christianity was Planted, Episcopacy was every where Establish'd, without one Exception.

There can be no great doubt concerning the Succeeding times. All our Histories, as far up as they give us any account of Christianity in this Island, tell us likewise of Bishops. And so it was in other Churches from the Apostolick Age to the days of *Mr. Calvin*. No other Form of Government is mention'd by any Authority for fifteen hundred years downwards.

And this is a very strong Argument, that it is of Apostolick institution. For, it is not otherwise conceivable, how it could

cou'd be brought into such *general* use throughout the whole *Catholick Church* in so short a time. How is it likely, that in those times of grievous *Persecution*, men shou'd usurp a *Pre-eminence*, which wou'd expose them to extreme *hazard*, *Torture*, and *Ruin*? That these great Masters of *self-denial*, who gave their Lives for the Truth, wou'd transmit unto Posterity a Government contrary to *Truth*? Or if we cou'd suppose them so Foolish and Wicked too, 'tis hardly possible, that they shou'd have gain'd this new *Point*, without some considerable *opposition*; and yet we never read of any. All the *Orthodox Church*, dispers'd all the World over, some parts having no Correspondence with the other, by reason of Distance, some by Wars divided and made cruel Enemies, agreed in this *Form* of Government. And not only the *Orthodox*, but the very *Schismatics*, and *Hereticks* (who separated from and persecuted the *Orthodox Church*) likewise retain'd this *Form* of Government; as if all were of *Necessity* compell'd to acknowledge *this*, having never known, heard, or dream'd of *other*.

II. But Mr. *Prefacer* objects two things, from *Scripture*, against this *Superiority*.

I. That we read of the *Ordination* of Timothy by the laying on of the hands of the *Presbytery*, 1 Tim. 4. 14. But if he will look into 2 Tim. 1. 6. He will find St. Paul speaking these words; *I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the Gift of God which is in thee, by the laying on of my Hands*. Now these words may admit of a *Reconciliation* without justifying the Practice of Ordaining by *Presbyters* only. For,

(1.) Your Patron, Mr. *Calvin* leaves you here, and takes the word Πρεσβυτέριον, or *Prerbytery*, in this place, for *Nomen Officii*, as importing no more than the *Office*, to which Timothy was set apart by the imposition of Hands. *I do not understand* (says he, in his *Institutions*) *as if Paul did speak of the College of Presbyters, but by this word I understand the Order it self*; as if he had said; "Take heed that the grace which thou receivest by the *Imposition* of hands, when I made thee a *Presbyter*, be not in vain.

(2.) The Antient Fathers say, the *Presbyters* here mention'd were *Bishops* only. And one of them tells us, that the *Apostle* calls those the *Presbytery* who receiv'd the gift of *Apostleship*, as the *Scripture* calls the *Honour'd* in *Israel*, a *Senate*.

nate. They concluded, they must be *Ecclesiastical Officers* of the first rank, as looking on it, not just or equal for an *Inferiour* to Ordain his *Superiour*.

(3.) But grant, they were mere *Presbyters*, yet it is past all doubt, that *St. Paul's hands* were among them. And we may reasonably believe, that he was the *Principal Person* in the *Action*, but had the *Presbytery* to be his *Assistants*, according to the *Practice* of the *Church of England*.

2. 'Tis objected, That *Presbyters* in Scripture are call'd *Bishops*, and therefore according to Scripture language, *Ordination by Presbyters is Episcopal Ordination*. A trivial *Equivocation* this, and a clear non-consequence. In the beginning of Christianity, regard was not had to the *Distinction of Names*, tho' the *Authority* and *Power* were ever *distinct*. *Bishops* were call'd *Apostles*, *Evangelists*, *Deacons* and *Priests*. And the *Priests* were call'd *Prophets* and *Bishops*. But in some process of time, even within one *Century* after *Christ*, the distinction of *Office* became commonly known by the *Distinction of Name*; *Bishop* being appropriate to him, who had an *Apostolical Presidency* of *Ordination* and *Jurisdiction* in the *Church*.

Now the reason why *Presbyters* were sometimes call'd *Bishops*, *Overseers*, or *Superintendents*, was because *these* did *Oversee*, or *Superintend* the *Laity*, as *those*, who were *Bishops* properly so call'd, did the *Clergie*.

But can any Man argue from hence a *Parity of Office*? The name *ἐπίσκοπος*, or *Bishops* (says *Suidas*) was given, by the *Athenians*, to them that were sent to *over-see* the *Cities* that were under their *Jurisdiction*. And *Episcopus*, among the *Romans*, to him who had the charge of laying up and selling *Provision*: But were they therefore *Bishops* in the sense we now consider the *Word*? Because *Christ* is call'd a *Deacon*, will you say, that he was no more? Or to come nearer home; As *Bishop* signifies an *Overseer*, so *Presbyter* an *Antient* or *Elderman*; whence our Term of *Alderman*. But is this (as the *Author* of the *Snake in the Grass* observes) a good *Foundation* to prove that the *Apostles* were *Aldermen* in the *City* acceptance of the word? Or that our *Aldermen* are all *Bishops* and *Apostles*? And yet it is altogether as *Ridiculous*, from the *Community of Name*, to prove the *Identity of Office* in *Bishop* and *Presbyter*.

III. I am now to vindicate what I said of the *Reform'd Clergy* abroad from the *Prefacer's* Objections. The words are these; *I take your case and that of some of the Reform'd Clergy abroad to be very Different. They wou'd have Episcopal Orders, if they cou'd, and think it their Unhappinefs that they have not. And God (no doubt) will make great Allowances for cases of Neceffity. But you are under no such Neceffity, &c. Pag.*

Before I enter into Particulars, I think fit to observe to you, that some of the *Reform'd Churches* abroad, have *Bishops*, both *name* and *thing*, as *Denmark, Norway, Sweden, &c.* And in most other *Reform'd Churches*, except *France* and *Holland*; they have a single Person, by the name of *Superintendent*, who exercises *Episcopal Authority*.

But that some of *those*, who have no *Bishops*, think it their *unhappinefs* that they have *not*, and have declar'd that the *Neceffity* of the *Times* oblig'd them to take up with *another* Form of Church Government, I hope will be made appear from their own *Words* and *Writings*.

And here, had I no other Books before me, I cou'd find enough to my Purpose in *Mr. Durell's View of the Government, and Publick Worship of God in the Reform'd Churches beyond the Seas*. As for the Churches of *Holland*, let *Bogermanus* speak, who was *President* at the Synod of *Dort*. When the *Bishop of Landaff* had, in a Speech of his, touch'd upon *Episcopal Government*, and shew'd, that the want thereof gave opportunity to those Divisions, which were then on foot in the *Netherlands*; the *President* stood up, and in a good Allowance of what had been spoken, said, *Domine nos non sumus adeo Faelices, My Lord, we are not so Happy as to enjoy the benefit of having Bishops* (see *Durel.*)

Those of the late *Reform'd Church of France*, were so far from condemning our Church Government as *Evil* and *Unlawful*, that they rather wish'd They were in a Condition to enjoy the Benefit thereof, most of them not sticking to say plainly, That if all the *Kingdom of France*, shou'd embrace the *Reform'd Doctrine*, They must of necessity have *Bishops*, and they wou'd most freely submit to them. (*Ibid.*)

Peter Moulin, in his Preface to his Father's Answer to *Peronne*, tells us, That the want of *Bishops* in the French Church was the necessity of their Condition; that they desire the same Government we have in *England*, if they might be so Happy.

When they mov'd *Cardinal Richlieu* to allow them *Bishops*, he flatly deny'd it them. They cou'd never get, of the Civil Power, a *Toleration* for *Bishops*. And who sees not that the *Popish Bishops* wou'd never have suffer'd any Minister to take their *Titles*, e. g. *Those of Paris, Roan, Lyons, Orleans, Burdeaux, &c.*

To give one Instance out of the *Apology of the Protestants for the Confession at Ausburg*. It was not (say they) out of any *Dislike at Episcopal Government*, but the *Cruelty of the Popish Bishops*, who did by all means hinder the *Reformation of Religion*, which did *Dissolve that Government and Canonical Polity*, which we earnestly desire to preserve.

Again, we have often testified, that we earnestly desire to retain the *Antient, Ecclesiastical Polity, and Degrees in the Church*. But the *Bishops (i. e. Popish)* compel our *Priests* to renounce their *Doctrine, &c.* Wherefore, in some places this *Polity* is destroy'd, which we heartily desir'd to keep.——This we declare before God and the *World*, that it shou'd not be imputed to us, that we have no *Bishops*. *Necessity* has no Law, but is a Law to it self.

This was the *Case* of those *Protestants heretofore*; and tho' some of them have *Magistrates* of their Own now, yet there may be *Jealousies, and Reasons of State*, which may render the *Change* of their Church Government not so easy as Mr. *Prefacer* apprehends it. *Mutations* are many times dangerous, (as my Lord *Faulkland* observes) even where what is introduc'd by that *Mutation*, is such, as wou'd have been very profitable upon a *primary Foundation*. If it might be done, certainly their Fault is great in not doing it.

We judge on the most *Charitable* side, and are so far from *Unchurching* them, as the *Prefacer* terms it, that we think them a much sounder Part of the Church, than those of the *Romish Communion*, tho' they were not first so *Regularly* form'd as our selves, and continue still in a more imperfect State. And therefore, as they joyn with us in the publick *Worship*, by the advice of their *Pastors*; so our *Gentlemen and Merchants*, readily joyn in their *Communion* when they travel abroad.

IV. The Fourth and last thing propos'd is to shew, That there is great reason to doubt of Mr. E's being *Regularly Commission'd* either to *Preach the Gospel, or to Administer the Sacraments*, And shou'd I have said that he is not *Regularly* Com-

Commission'd, I don't know that I shou'd have gone beyond the 23d Article of the Church of England, contain'd in these words. *It is not Lawful for any man to take upon him the Office of publick Preaching, or Ministring the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be Lawfully call'd and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge Lawfully call'd and sent, which be chosen and call'd to this work by Men, who have publick Authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers in the Lord's Vineyard.*

Now, that which we believe to be *Lawful Authority* (as the Learn'd Bishop of Sarum observes) is *that Rule which the Body of the Pastors, or Bishops and Clergy of a Church shall settle, being met in a Body under the due Respect to the Powers that God shall set over them: Rules thus made, being in nothing contrary to the word of God, and duly executed by the Particular Persons, to whom that Care belongs, are certainly the lawful Authority.*

Nothing is more clear, than that the Government of our *English Church* is *Episcopal*, and that according to our Constitution, no Man can be Regularly commission'd either to preach the Gospel, or administer the Sacraments in the Church of England, without *Episcopal Orders*. Since we may have Choice (says a Doctor of our Church) we admit none to officiate in the Church, but those who are undoubtedly Ministers rightly Ordain'd, thereby to avoid any Scandal to others, and to prevent all Doubts and Scruples in many among our selves, who wou'd be much troubled to live all their lives under such a Minister, from whom they were not certain to receive the Sacraments duly administer'd, or true Ministerial Benediction.

I suppose, these Gentlemen I have to do with, will not think the *Act of Toleration* a sufficient Commission without some previous Ordination. And tho' Ordination by Presbyters commissions a Man to execute the Ministerial Offices in *Holland* or *Geneva*, yet it will not do so here. *Presbytery* is their Establish'd Church Government, as *Episcopacy* is ours. And they were Necessitated to content themselves with this, by the Conjunction of Affairs, and Injury of the Times. And surely, they were much in the Right, when they chose rather to do so, than run into all the Measures of Popery, without which it cou'd not be avoided.

But the Case of our Gentlemen is very different; they make *Presbytery* their Choice, and oppose *Episcopacy*, alledg-

ng it to be one Reason of their Separation. *The Reform'd Churches* (says Dr. Sherlock.) *Separated from Popish Bishops, our Dissenters from Episcopacy it self.* And there is a vast Difference between separating from Episcopal Communion, where Episcopacy is the settled Government of the Church, and living without Episcopal Government where we cannot have it. What may be allow'd in cases of Necessity, where Ordinary Means and Rules cannot be had, must not be allow'd in other Circumstances, where there is not the like Necessity.

These Foreign Ordinations are *Irregular*; but *Yours*, besides the *Irregularity*, are *Schismatical*, and such as were never allow'd in the *Primitive Church*; nor countenanc'd by those *Reform'd Churches* you appeal to.

1. For the *Primitive Church*, *Clouds of Witnesses* might be produc'd, but it no way suits with my design'd Brevity. Enough has been said from the *Scriptures* already: And Dr. Comber observes, that *the Canons of the Apostles are Express, that two or three Bishops are Necessary to the Consecrating a Bishop, and one to the Ordaining a Priest and Deacon.* Afterwards that Bishops alone did Ordain, is so plain, that it needs no Proof. St. Jerom, where he warmly attempts to equal Presbyters and Bishops in many things, yet even there excepts the Power of Ordination, as of right belonging to the Bishop. St. Chrysostom makes the same Exception as to Ordination.

They are known Examples which we have of *Museus*, and *Eutychianus*, two *Grecian* Presbyters, who having Ordain'd without the Bishop, and themselves not being Bishops, their Ordination was declar'd by the Council of Sardis (about Eleven years after *Constantine the Great*) to be Null: And those, they had Ordain'd, were reduc'd to the State and Condition of *Laicks*, as such who had *dissembled* and *forg'd* their Orders.

As for what the Prefacer says from Mr. Selden out of *Eutychius*, I refer the Reader to Dr. Hammond's 4th Vol. pag. 792. And to the brief account of *Antient Church Government*, p. 234. Where he will find, that *Eutychius*, being a late Writer of the Tenth Age, and in several things contradicting the Undoubted Testimony of the *Antienter*, no Credit can be given to him, sufficient to establish the Cause of Presbytery.

2. If you consult the *Reform'd* abroad who have no Bishops, you'll find the Practice of our Dissenters no ways countenanc'd

tenan'd by them. *Beza*, in his Epistle to the English Puritans from Geneva, Anno 1567, says. I tremble to think that any shou'd perform their Ministerial Duty against the Will of Her Majesty and the Bishops. Monsieur Gaches, one of the Ministers of Charenton in France, writes thus. I am of this Opinion that the Bishops had very much exceeded the Authority which they had in the two first Ages, and were not so Religious as St. Cyprian, who wou'd do nothing without his Presbyters; yet that Difference in Government ought not to cause a Division in the Church. And in another Letter to the same Person: Would to God (said he) we had no other Differences with the Bishops of France, but their Dignity; How chearfully shou'd I submit my self to them, altho' you know that your Toke is Heavy, far heavier than that of the Bishops of England. How comes it to pass then, that those of your Presbyterians, who are Great, Understanding and wise Men, have such an Aversion against Moderate Episcopacy? Durel's View. pag. 125.

Pag. 127. You have these words from Monsieur le Moynes, in a Letter to the same Doctor. Truly I believe not that it is possible to keep either Peace or Order in your Church without preserving the Episcopal Dignity. And I confess that I conceive not by what Spirit they are led, who oppose that Government, and cry it down with such Violence. For I desire any Man, whosoever he be, to shew me, if he can, another Order more suitable with Reason, yea, or better agreeing with Holy Scripture.

In Monsieur le Angle's Letter to the Bishop of London, as you have it at the End of Bishop Stillingfleet's Unreasonableness of Separation, you may find him as much on our side. My Lord, I would to God that all the Mistaken Christians that are in the World would receive God's Reformation: I would, with my Heart, spend all the Blood I have to procure them so great a Good. And I am sure with what an exceeding Joy our Churches would enter into their Communion, it being pure in their Opinions for Doctrine, they differ'd no more from us, than by Surplices and innocent Ceremonies, and some diversity of Orders in the Government of the Church.

Since the Church of England is a true Church of our Lord; since her Worship and Doctrines are pure, and have nothing in them contrary to the Word of God; and since that when the Reformation was there receiv'd, it was receiv'd together with Episcopacy, and with the Establishment of the Liturgy, and Ceremonies, which are there in use at this day; it is, without doubt, the Duty of all the Reformed of your Realm, to keep themselves inseparably united to the Church. And those that do not do this, upon pretence
that

that they should desire more simplicity in their Ceremonies, and less of inequality among the Ministers, do certainly commit a very great Sin. For Schism is the most formidable evil that can befall the Church: and for the avoiding of this, Christian Charity obliges all good Men to bear with their Brethren in some things, much less tolerable than those (of which the Dispute is) ought to seem, even in the Eyes of those that have the most Aversion for them. And this was so much the Opinion of our Great and Excellent Calvin, that in his Treatise of the Necessity of the Reformation, he makes no Difficulty to say, that if there should be any so Unreasonable, as to refuse the Communion of a Church, that was pure in its Worship and Doctrine, and not to submit himself with respect to its Government, under Pretence that it had retain'd an Episcopacy qualified as Yours is, there would be no Censure, nor rigour of Discipline, that ought to be exercised upon them.

You see then what Opinion the Reformers abroad, who have no Bishops, have of our Church, and her Ordination. Those of them, who come into England, and had only Ordination by Presbyters, upon their being presented here to any Benefice, do readily receive Episcopal Ordination. And I want an instance of any One Reform'd Church in the World, where Bishops are Establish'd, that Ordination by Presbyters, in opposition to them, is accounted as Valid.

Our Dissenting Brethren therefore have no Reason to be angry with us, if we Question their Title to the Ministry, or say to them as Optatus did to the Donatists; *Who are ye, and whence do ye come?* They are under no such Necessities as others, and are highly to be blam'd in decrying that sort of Government, which has been transmitted down to us from the Apostles, throughout all succeeding Ages; and was establish'd in all Christian Nations, that they may introduce another, which was unknown to Antiquity; and for above a Thousand years after Christ, was not received by any Church in the World.

But Mr. Prefacer here objects these things, pag. 16, 17.

1. That among the Papists, Men of an Inferiour Order do make the Pope, &c.
2. That the Reformation was begun by Presbyters, &c.
3. That the Ancient Vaudois or Waldenses had no other Ministers for near 500 years past, but such as were Ordained by Presbyters without Bishops.

But the truth on't is, I can't see that the two first of these are so much to the purpose, as to deserve any Consideration. And what he says of the Vaudois or Waldenses, may be well enough answer'd

answer'd by the Accounts given of the Necessity, other Reformers were in, to content themselves with Orders from the *Presbytery only*. For a great many years they have past in the Accounts of the late Reformed Church of *France*, enjoy'd the same Priveledges, &c. And if you would hear any thing more from that Quarter, I'll give you another Instance out of a Letter from Mr. *Du Bose*, Preacher of the Reformed Church of *Caen*, to *De Brevint*, Anno 1660. enough to put a stop to their making any farther Appeals to the Protestants abroad.

I think not (saies he) that any of my Brethren will Contradict me, if I say, that well order'd Episcopacy hath most Important and most Considerable Utilities, which cannot be found in the Presbyterian Discipline. If we have followed the last in our Churches, it is not for any aversion that we have against the former: It is not because we hold Episcopacy to be contrary to the Nature of the Gospel, or because we think it less convenient for the good of the Church, or less worthy of the Condition of the true Flocks of the Lord, but it is because Necessity hath obliged us to it; because Reformation having been begun in this Kingdom by the People, and by Inferior Church-Men, the Places of Bishops remain filled with men of contrary Religion, so that we were constrain'd to content our selves with Ministers and Elders as well as we could, for fear of setting Bishop against Bishop in the same Town, which would have caused furious Troubles and implacable Wars, and put a great stop to the Progress of the Gospel. Durel's View. p. 122.

To draw then towards a Conclusion, whosoever sets up *Altar* against *Altar* in the Church, and withdraws his Obedience from the lawful Commands of his Superiors; or usurping a Ministerial Office, to which he is not duly call'd, doth wilfully, and without any Necessity, break the Laws of *Apostolical Succession*; such a one walks disorderly and works Confusion, which is not to be a Follower of God, and Christ. I will not say that God hath tied the *Efficacy* of the Sacraments, and of his Grace, and consequently the Salvation of Men, to the *Punctilio's* of *Ordination*; so that all those that separate from us must be lost, undone, and perish for ever. Our Church is far from such severe Doctrines. There are, no doubt, good and well-meaning Persons among them, and God will make great Allowances for Human Weakness, and the Prejudices of Education.

But certainly this may be said, and ought to be considered, that the *Usurpers* of an Office, and Invaders of well Establish'd Order and Discipline, have no such Reason to expect a Blessing from the God of Peace and Order, as those who are regularly

call'd

all'd and ordain'd, nor can be Ministers of such Sound and Orderly Christians.

And therefore as it concerns all Persons who wou'd be secure of being within the *Pale* of a right Constituted Gospel-Church, not to *separate* themselves from the *Establis'd Communion*, which has all the Marks of such a Church: So if Mr. E. cannot conform as a *Clergy-Man*, he should rather do it as a *Laick*, than lead People out of the right way, and make a rupture in the Myſtical Body of Christ.

Lay Communion was heretofore look'd on to be *lawfull*: And I dare say, if most of the Preachers, at this day Day in the separate Meetings, were soberly ask'd their Judgments, whether it *were lawful* for the People to joyn with us in the Publick Assemblies, they would not deny it: And if it be *lawful* it must be a *Sin*; nay, I will venture to say (because 'tis greable to Mr. England's own arguing) they must be guilty of *Schism* if they do not.

This is what Mr. E. should instruct the People that follow him in, who I am affraid, thro' his means, generally think otherwise. Mr. Baxter will tell him, *that every tender Conscience should be as tender of Church Divisions and real Schism, as of Drunkenness, Whoredom, or such other enormous Sins*. And indeed they may be no less hurtful in their Consequences. As I have now in the Fear of God, and Integrity of my Heart, done what I could to prevent the former; so I will use my utmost Endeavour to put a stop to the Prophaneness and Imorality Mr. E. complains of, and which reigns too too much among us.

I hope that the *Voice of God* in the late mighty *Winds*, will put us all upon thoughts of Peace, and upon wisely considering the things which belong to our Present and Eternal Welfare: And that *when his Judgments are so visibly in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness*.

FINIS.

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